WORKS

OF

THE LATE REVEREND

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RECTOR OF

SAINT ANDREW BY THE WARDROBE,

AND

SAINT ANN, BLACKFRIARS,

AND

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DISCOURSES

UPON

SOLOMON's SONG;

PREACHED AT

ST. DUNSTAN's CHURCH, IN THE WEST,

LONDON.

We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.—1 JOHN iv. 16.

Entered at Stationers Hall.



TO THE

PARISHIONERS

OF

ST. DUNSTAN's IN THE WEST.

My dear Brethren,

I TAKE this opportunity of acknowledging the many and great favours which I have received from you. My gratitude cannot better appear, than in labouring to the beſt of my power in that ſtation to which you have called me. Ever ſince you were pleaſed unanimouſly to chooſe me your Lecturer, I have endeavoured to diſcharge my duty as one who muſt give an account; and in what manner I diſcharge it, let theſe Sermons, which I now dedicate unto you, bear witneſs. There is a

great and awful day at hand, in which the righteous ſcarcely ſhall be ſaved, and where then ſhall the wicked and ungodly appear? On this day at the bar of the almighty Judge I muſt ſtand to give an account of my miniſtry among you: knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, I have not ſhunned to declare unto you the whole counſel of God. He knoweth my heart, and he has ſeen how honeſtly I have preached the word, and how earneſt I have been with him in prayer for a bleſſing upon it. Oh that I may deliver my own ſoul! And God grant you may deliver yours. You have heard me for ſome years, and chiefly upon the ſame ſubject. I hope you are not tired of hearing of the love of Jeſus to poor helpleſs ſinners; I am ſure I am not tired of ſpeaking upon it. The firſt Sermon I preached among you was upon this

text,

text, 1 Cor. ii. 1, 2. "And I, brethren, "when I came to you, came not with "excellency of ſpeech, or of wiſdom, "declaring unto you the teſtimony of "God: for I determined not to know "any thing among you, ſave Jeſus "Chriſt, and him crucified." What I then determined in God's ſtrength, I have thus far been enabled to perform. The great ſubject of all my preaching, as ye know, is Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, inviting and calling careleſs ſinners from the error of their ways, and preſſing them to come to Chriſt for the pardon of their ſins, for ſtrength to ſubdue ſin, and for grace to do good works pleaſant and acceptable unto God. This pardon, ſtrength, and grace, are not to be had, but from Chriſt. He alone has them to give; and that you might ſee the neceſſity of applying to him for them, I have been continually ſetting

forth the miſery of fallen man, until he receives Chriſt Jeſus the Lord for his Saviour and his God, and the complete happineſs he enjoys after he has received him. With what ſucceſs I have preached you muſt give an account at the ſame awful bar, at which I am to be tried, and before a judge who is no reſpecter of perſons. Oh that I may not appear againſt any of you in that great day. I have good reaſon to believe that many of you will then be, I pray God you may all then be, my joy and crown of rejoicing. Happy will it be for you and me, if I ſhould ſee the judge place you all on his right hand. And whether you was brought to this bleſſedneſs by my miniſtry or not, if you do but enjoy it I ſhall have cauſe to glorify God on your behalf.

My brethren, the time is ſhort. Work while it is day: for the night cometh,

in which no man can work. It is but a ſhort day, in which you have to finiſh the work of eternity; therefore give all diligence to make your calling and election ſure. Get poſſeſſion and enjoyment of the preſent graces of ſalvation, without which you cannot have any well-grounded hopes of eternal ſalvation. Jeſus muſt ſave you from the guilt, and ſave you from the dominion of ſin, he muſt juſtify you by his righteouſneſs, and ſanctify you by his ſpirit, before you can ſee the face of God with joy in his kingdom of glory. And have you then received theſe graces from him? This, my beloved brethren, is the moſt intereſting queſtion you can put to yourſelves. Upon the deciſion of it depends an eternity of happineſs or miſery. Have you received theſe graces, or not? May he, that teacheth man wiſdom, teach you to

anſwer

anſwer it to yourſelves, as you will anſwer it to him. May he lead you into all truth. Save you from all ſin. Enable you to live to his glory, and make you happy in his love here, in time, and in eternity.

God knoweth, that this is the prayer of my heart. When that ſolemn day ſhall come, in which all ſecrets ſhall be laid open, then it will be known with what view I have written this Dedication. God grant my deſign in it may be anſwered, and may it then appear that you have reaped the profit from it which I moſt heartily deſired. Having taken this occaſion of thanking you for all temporal favours, my love to your ſouls would not let me loſe an opportunity of ſpeaking a word for Chriſt, although it was out of the pulpit. He has unſearchable, ineſtimable and eternal riches in his power, and

to

to perſuade you to ſeek them has been and ſhall be the labour, and to intreat him to beſtow them upon you, ſhall be the prayer, of

Your faithful Miniſter and

Servant in the Lord Jeſus,

WILLIAM ROMAINE.

12 JY 62

PREFACE.

READER,

I HERE offer thee a Volume of Sermons upon ſome parts of the Song of Songs. They were compoſed and preached at a time, when I had ſome thoughts of treating the whole book in a plain practical way; but that deſign being laid aſide, I have made ſome of the Sermons public, hoping they may be the means of removing men's prejudices, and of reconciling their minds to this ſweet portion of God's holy word.

It is a certain, but a melancholy matter of fact, that there has been more ridicule waſted upon the Song, than upon any other portion of God's word. And we need not marvel at it. The devil has a particular ſpite againſt this book; he hates the ſubject, and he hates the compoſition. He cannot bear to hear

hear of man's being reſtored to that fellowſhip and communion with God which himſelf once had, but can never hope for again: and therefore this treatiſe upon it is the object of his moſt deviliſh malice, and he is always ſtirring up his agents to write and to ſpeak contemptibly of it. And he has been too ſucceſsful in his temptation. Many perſons fell into it, becauſe it flattered their pride. They ſet up themſelves for judges of all ſubjects, divine as well as human, and made their reaſon the criterion of all truth. They tried this book by their reaſon, and they did not underſtand it, therefore they thought no body did. Upon the force of this concluſion they took a general licence to ridicule it; but the concluſion is not logical: for certainly the book may be intelligible, although they do not underſtand it. Modeſt reaſon would incline them to be of this opinion, becauſe many learned men in every age have thought it intelligible, and many good men without much learning have underſtood it. The true cauſe of which

was this: They underſtood the ſubject treated of in this book, which the enemies of it did not. A deaf man is as good a judge of a fine piece of muſic, as a man who has no real heart-love for God is of a treatiſe upon the love of God: for as he has no knowledge of the ſubject, how can he underſtand what is written upon it? If a man ignorant of mathematics was to take up Sir Iſaac Newton's Principia, and to cry out, What ſtuff is this? Who can make any thing of theſe ſtrange lines and figures, and theſe A's and B's? A great mathematician ſtanding by would pity the poor man's ignorance. In like manner when any perſon takes up a book upon communion with God, and either does not believe there is ſuch a thing, or has had no experience of it, how can he underſtand what is written? It muſt appear to him mere jargon and gibberiſh; and if he has a talent at ridicule, here is a tempting occaſion for him to diſplay it. Whereas the fault is not in the book, but in the man who reads it. It may be a perfect compoſition,

poſition, and he may be no judge of it. The book is plain enough to them who are properly qualified to read it. If you underſtand the true genius of the tongue in which it was written, and have ſome inſight into the ſubject of which it treats, it will then be as intelligible as any other portion of ſcripture; but the enemies of this book underſtand neither of theſe particulars. They are not qualified to judge, and yet they venture to condemn it: for

Firſt, They are not acquainted with the nature of the Hebrew tongue, without which no man ſhould pretend to be a critic upon the writings of the Old Teſtament. If any perſon ſhould write profeſſedly againſt Homer, and try to prove there was no genius, invention, or ſublimity in his poems, with what contempt would the learned treat his performance, eſpecially if they knew that this ignoramus did not underſtand one word of Greek, no nor one letter. If ſuch an attack upon Homer appear ridiculous to men of learning, how much more ridiculous ſhould an attack of the ſame nature

appear

appear upon a treatiſe in Hebrew: becauſe the Hebrew is more difficult to be tranſlated, word for word, than any Greek author can be. It has ſome peculiar properties and idioms, which no other language has, with which every critic ſhould be acquainted, leſt he ſhould raiſe objections that would only betray his own ignorance. The Hebrew is a fixt language. It is not like ours, arbitrary and changeable. We are continually gaining ſome new word, or dropping ſome obſolete one, or affixing ſome new idea to a word, which we have done remarkably in the word charity. When our liturgy was compiled, and afterwards when the preſent tranſlation of the Bible was made, charity ſignified love, but now we uſe it for nothing but giving of alms. If you were to uſe it in its ancient ſenſe, and to talk of the charity of God, who would not be underſtood. But the Hebrew is free from theſe imperfections. It is fixt in nature, and cannot change, unleſs nature ſhould. Every word ſtands for ſome material and ſenſible object, which God created to repreſent and to give us ideas

of

of ſome correſpondent and ſpiritual object. Like as in parables there is an outward and literal ſenſe, by which an inward and ſpiritual meaning is conveyed, ſo is it in every Hebrew word. And a critic ſhould underſtand Hebrew upon this plan. He ſhould be acquainted with the genius of the Hebrew tongue, and with its manner of expreſſing ſpiritual things under their appointed images in nature. And it is more neceſſary he ſhould have this knowledge in order to underſtand this book, becauſe it is the worſt tranſlated of all ſcripture. Our tranſlators have not failed more in any part of the Old Teſtament, than they have here. Inſtead of giving us the ſpiritual meaning of the words, they have ſeldom given us any thing but the literal ſenſe, and ſometimes they have given us the Hebrew word without any tranſlation at all. If they had tranſlated the prophecy of Iſaiah in the ſame injudicious manner, it would have been as abſtruſe as this book is. I hope to ſee it made as intelligible as the prophecy of Iſaiah. There are ſeveral perſons at preſent in our church of great

leiſure

leiſure, and great abilities, and it is much to be wiſhed they would employ them in explaining this book. The moſt proper method they could take ſeems to me, to ſettle firſt the true literal ſenſe of every word in the Song, and then, as it is entirely a ſpiritual book, treating of communion with God, to fix the ſpiritual idea to each word; and where we have not a proper word in Engliſh to expreſs the full ſenſe of a Hebrew word, they might give it in a ſhort paraphraſe. Whenever this is done the mouths of our ignorant mockers will be ſtopped, and it will appear that all their objections aroſe from their ignorance.

Thus the enemies of this book are ignorant of the true genius of the Hebrew tongue, in which it is written, and they borrow their arguments againſt it not from the faults of the book itſelf, but from the faults in the tranſlation; and they are alſo ignorant of the ſubject upon which it treats. It is one of the deep things of God, which the natural man cannot underſtand. He has none of this love to God which is here deſcribed, nor can he attain

attain it by any means in his own power. It is a love that comes down from God. He is the giver of it, and it is ſhed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit, who beſtows the comforts of it upon them that are pardoned and reconciled to the Father in the Son of his love, and that can therefore truly ſay with the apoſtle John—"We know and have believed the love "that God hath to us." Whoever ſits down to read this book, be he ever ſo learned in other matters, yet if he has no knowledge of God's love to him, he cannot underſtand what he reads. The objectors to this book are ſo far from pretending to have any of this experimental love of God, that they laugh at it and ridicule it; whereby they plainly declare, that they are not judges of the ſubject upon which this book treats, and therefore they are not fit to ſit in judgment upon it.

Theſe are the two principal reaſons why this book is ſo little underſtood, and ſo much ridiculed. I need not enlarge upon them here, becauſe they are often taken notice of in the Sermons, to which I refer the

the reader. When I firſt thought of making them public, I did not foreſee how ſeaſonable they would be. It appears to me quite providential, that theſe Sermons upon the love of God ſhould be publiſhed juſt at this time, when I am furiouſly attacked by a nameleſs writer, and charged with preaching nothing but hell and damnation. It would have been as true a charge, if he had ſaid I always preached in Hebrew. This volume ſhall anſwer for me. Here my doctrine is, Believe and thou ſhalt be ſaved, love God and thou ſhalt be happy. May he who has this ſaving belief, and this happy love to give, for his mercy's ſake beſtow them upon this my bitter enemy and open perſecutor.

I have nothing more to add, but to intreat the bleſſer of all nations to accompany the reading of theſe Sermons with his bleſſing. May he water them with the dew of his heavenly grace, and render them uſeful and profitable to every perſon into whoſe hands they may fall. Reader, if thou findeſt any unction from the Holy

One in them, and reapeſt any benefit from them, give God the glory, and pray for the author. Thou canſt not do me any ſervice which I more want or value than thy prayers. Pray, that the grace of Chriſt may do more in me, and that I may do more for Chriſt. And in return I will pray for thee, that the Spirit of the living God may enable thee to underſtand this divine Song, and to experience the comforts of its doctrine, and then thou wilt be in poſſeſſion of the greateſt happineſs thou canſt enjoy on this ſide of heaven.

Upon reviſing theſe ſheets for a new edition of the following Sermons, I had great reaſon to bleſs the Lord God, that my views of this ſubject were the ſame as they were ſeveral years ago—only confirmed by long experience. It is a good thing to be eſtabliſhed in the truth, and by conſtant uſe to get into holy and happy practice. When the believer has received Chriſt, it is his privilege to be growing up into him in all things. Flouriſhing like a palm tree, and mounting up like

like the cedar in Lebanon. Certain doctrines are then not to be diſputed. The eſſential glory of Immanuel---The abſolute perfection of his ſaving work---The effectual application of it to the conſciences, to the hearts, and to the lives of believers by the Holy Spirit; in theſe it is good and right that there ſhould be no variableneſs nor ſhadow of turning. Jeſus Chriſt, and his work, and his Spirit, and his fulneſs, being the ſame, yeſterday, to day, and for ever.

Much has been written and ſpoken againſt theſe Sermons, as if I had therein made too much of Chriſt. I think it impoſſible. His perſon is above all bleſſing and praiſe. His ſalvation is infinitely perfect, and contains an eternal fulneſs of all graces and glories. His promiſes are exceeding great and exceeding precious---already made good to him, as the head, and by him made good to all his people. When the ſpirit of life that is in him ſets them free from the law of ſin and of death, they are pardoned, and righteous, and holy, and bleſſed in the Beloved. Which

of them can come up to the greatneſs of ſuch a ſubject? Who can ſhew forth all the praiſes of ſuch a Jeſus? I cannot. Inſtead of thinking that I have ſpoken too highly of him, I am very ſenſible of my many and great failings. May the glorifier of Jeſus enable me to ſpeak more worthily of him in earth and heaven.

12 JY 62

DISCOURSES

UPON THE

SONG OF SOLOMON.

SERMON I.

CHAP. VI. VER. I.

The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's.

GOD is love. The whole ſcripture is a hiſtory of the wonders which his love has done for the children of men. It was love which firſt gave being to the univerſe. The ſame continued love has preſerved it. But the deſcription of the works of creation and preſervation takes up a ſmall part of the ſacred volume. The great ſubject of it is redeeming love. In this ſweet and amiable light God has propoſed himſelf to our conſideration. When his juſtice was offended at the tranſgreſſion of his holy law, his love contrived how to get glory to every divine attribute, by pardoning and ſaving the tranſgreſſor. He had provided the covenant of grace, in which

was

was the richeſt diſplay of his infinite love. In this covenant he glories. He ſets it forth and recommends it, as the greateſt work of God, and has revealed the Old Teſtament and the New to demonſtrate to ſinners, that our redeeming God is love. When Moſes deſired to ſee his glory, he did not refer him to the works of creation, or to the inſtances which he had ſeen of his almighty power; but he ſent him to the mercies of redemption, in which he might have the ſtrongeſt evidences of God's glory. He proclaimed himſelf as the Old Teſtament God, under the ſtile and title of—"The Lord, the "Lord God, merciful and gracious, long ſuffer-"ing, and abundant in goodneſs, and truth, "keeping mercy for thouſands, forgiving ini-"quity and tranſgreſſion and ſin." (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.) This deſcription was fulfilled, when the brightneſs of divine glory was revealed in the perſon of Jeſus Chriſt. When he came into the world to ſave men from their ſins, then his diſciples beheld his glory, and believed that God was love: then they ſaw the completion of what was written in all the ſcriptures, more eſpecially in the Song of Songs, concerning the greatneſs of redeeming love: for though all ſcripture treats largely of it, yet this is an entire treatiſe upon the ſubject. It contains a lively deſcription of the perfect love which our redeeming God has for returning ſinners, and of the grateful affection

which

which his love ſtirs up in them. He relates what graces and bleſſings he would beſtow upon them, and they expreſs their happineſs in the enjoyment of his graces and bleſſings. He finds them black and deformed ſinners, and he preſents them fair and without ſpot in the ſight of God, and they, knowing him to be their beloved and their friend, ſee him altogether lovely. Upon this ſubject they diſcourſe, ſetting forth the happineſs of their mutual love.

The Jews call this book "The Holy of Holies," and ſo it is to every one, who has the love of God ſhed abroad in his heart. Here he converſes with the moſt holy perſons and things, and has a foretaſte of thoſe pleaſures which are at God's right-hand for evermore. But here the carnal and unregenerate man reads at the peril of his own ſoul. He enters as it were into the holy of holies, which was death by the law. He is ignorant of God's being in this place. He puts not off his ſhoe, although it be holy ground. He puts not off concerning his former converſation the old man, who is corrupt according to the deceitful luſts, and who neither does underſtand the things of God treated of in this book, nor can underſtand them for want of a ſpiritual diſcernment. He cannot know them, ſays the word of truth, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned; and therefore if he meddle with them he muſt prophane them. The more ſacred they are, the more

more contrary are they to his nature. The more wholſeſome they are to the ſpiritual man, the more poiſon will the natural man extract from them; and that which is a ſavour of life, proves to him a ſavour of death.

Away then ye prophane. Come not near to the holy of holies, nor preſume to look into it, leſt ye die. You are no more fit to read this book, than you are to partake of the ſacred elements at the Lord's table. With your carnal unregenerate heart you will read the one, and partake of the other to your greater condemnation. Oh keep back then, and preſume not to look into, or to judge of the ſacred myſteries of this divine ſong. But if you will venture to read it, and to ridicule it, remember that it is one of the treaſures of divine wiſdom; and though you may level your wit againſt a Song of Solomon's, yet it falls upon the Almighty God who inſpired it. And are you arrived at ſuch deſperate wit, as to break jeſts upon God, and to make ſport with his omnipotence? Oh fear and tremble for yourſelves, leſt while you are ſhooting up your arrows, even your bitter words againſt heaven, God ſhould ſend them back upon your own heads with a ſwift deſtruction. May his grace ſhew you your danger, and diſpoſe you to leave your ſins; and whenever you are ſtirred up to ſeek pardon and peace in Chriſt Jeſus, then you will begin to underſtand this book; and when you

you have any experience of God's love to you, then you will find comfort and profit in reading it.

I propoſe through God's aſſiſtance to treat of ſome parts of it in a practical way, and to make our future conſideration of theſe particular paſſages more plain and eaſy, I ſhall at preſent lay before you a general plan of the book. And this we have in the words now read. They are the title prefixed to it by its divine author, and ſerve as a ſhort comment to explain its principal uſe. I ſhall therefore endeavour,

Firſt, To ſettle the true ſenſe and meaning of the words—From whence we may gather,

Secondly, That the ſcope and deſign of this ſweet portion of ſcripture is to deſcribe the mutual love of Chriſt and his church.

Thirdly, I ſhall bring ſome arguments to prove that this is the ſcope and deſign of it. And,

Laſtly, I will reduce theſe truths to practice, and make ſome uſeful inferences from them.

And Firſt, The words now read are the title, which the Holy Spirit prefixed to the book, that they might ſerve as a key to open its ſcope and deſign. The Song of Songs which is concerning Solomon, which treats of Solomon. A ſong in the ſcripture uſage of the term, conſiſts in ſetting forth the praiſes of God. It is a hymn to his honour and glory. The ſpiritual ſongs of ſcripture have no other object but the God of love,

and

and no other end but to raiſe and to exalt our ideas of him, and of his works, eſpecially of his works of grace, whereby he brings loſt ſinners to an happy ſenſe and ſweet experience of his love. St. Paul has given us a ſhort, but it is a very full comment upon the ſcripture ſongs (Col. iii. 16.) "Let the word of Chriſt dwell in you richly in "all wiſdom, teaching and admoniſhing one "another in pſalms, and hymns, and ſpiritual "ſongs, ſinging with grace in your hearts unto "the Lord." Hence we learn the nature of theſe ſongs; they are the words of Chriſt, revealed by him and concerning him, and in them we are to teach and to admoniſh one another, to the end that the word of Chriſt may dwell in us richly in all wiſdom: for they are ſpiritual ſongs; and he that ſings them muſt have grace in his heart, without this qualification he will ſing the ſong of fools; and he muſt alſo ſing "to "the Lord," to the glory and honour of his holy name. After this apoſtolical rule we may explain this ſong. It is the word of Chriſt, revealed by him, and concerning him, and we are to teach and to admoniſh one another in the things of Chriſt out of this ſong. We have the apoſtle's command to do it, with this encouragement, that the word of Chriſt may dwell in us richly in all wiſdom: for this ſong is of a ſpiritual nature, treating of ſpiritual perſons and things, and cannot be ſung aright unleſs grace

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be in the heart, nor will profit, unleſs we have an eye to the Lord in every word of it. If we look off from him to any lower object, we not only loſe ſight of its ſcope and deſign, but we alſo form a judgment of it contrary to the judgment of the Holy Spirit, who has exalted this above the reſt of the ſcripture ſongs, and has dignified it with the high title of "The "Song of Songs." There are many divine ſongs, but this is by way of eminence above, and in copiouſneſs, comprehends them all. It is the ſum and ſubſtance of them, and the point to which they tend. God is the ſubject of every ſpiritual ſong, and what can we find in God which calls for louder ſongs of praiſe, than that love which is above all his works; which was before them, for it gave them their being, which is with them to preſerve it, and will be with them to the boundleſs ages of eternity. Surely a hymn upon this exalted ſubject deſerves the title of "The Song of Songs;" eſpecially when the divine perſon, of whom he treats, is conſidered in it under his moſt amiable character, and ſet forth under the ſtile and title of the prince of peace; for this is the meaning of the word Solomon in Hebrew. The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's, our tranſlation reads; but the Hebrew particle put before Solomon is the ſign not of the genitive, but of the dative caſe, and is frequently rendered

concerning

concerning or touching ſuch a perſon or thing. Thus, Iſaiah v. 1. "Now will I ſing to my well-"beloved a ſong of my beloved, touching his "vineyard. And again, Pſalm xlv. 1. "I ſpeak "of the things which I have made touching the "king." It is alſo ſeveral times rendered concerning, as Gen. xix. 21. "I have accepted thee "concerning this thing; and in Jer. xlix. it is frequently tranſlated concerning. In this ſenſe it is here uſed. The Song of Songs which is concerning Solomon—not king Solomon, but the prince of peace, Jeſus Chriſt, of whom Solomon was a type and figure, as it appears from the lxxiid Pſalm, which has the ſame title with the Song. It is inſcribed to Solomon—Is concerning him, and treats of him; but ſeveral paſſages of it can be applied to none but Jeſus the prince of peace, of whom only it could be truly ſaid that he had dominion from one end of the earth to the other, that all kings ſhould fall down before him, and all nations ſhould ſerve him, that he ſhould ſave the ſouls of the needy, and ſhould redeem their ſouls, and that prayer ſhould be made unto him continually, and all nations ſhould call him bleſſed. Theſe things cannot be ſpoken of king Solomon---but they are ſtrictly true of the prince of peace, Jeſus the Lord of life and redeemer of ſinners.---Therefore the title of the lxxiid Pſalm, has the ſame meaning with the title of the Song; and when the Holy Spirit ſays,

ſays, " The Song of Songs which is concerning " the Lord and giver of peace," he would plainly point out to us the principal uſe of this ſcripture. It is a treatiſe concerning the God of love, under the character of the prince of peace, deſcribing how happy we are in Chriſt Jeſus, when we, who ſometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Chriſt: for he is our peace. And this leads me to conſider,

Secondly, The ſcope and deſign of this ſweet portion of ſcripture. It is to deſcribe the peace, which Chriſt has given to the faithful ſoul, and ſets forth the happineſs of the ſoul in the enjoyment of it. Chriſtian peace is the fruit of that love which the Holy Spirit has manifeſted to ſinners, and flows from a ſenſe of their reconciliation with God through Jeſus Chriſt their Lord, of which the apoſtle thus ſpeaks: " Being " juſtified by faith, we have peace with God " through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and rejoice " in hope of the glory of God." And when we have thus taſted how gracious the Lord is, then we cannot but love him, who firſt loved us, and the ſenſe of this love fills the mind with joy and peace: in this order St. Paul has placed theſe graces, " The fruit of the Spirit is love, " joy, peace."---Our love is by nature placed upon a wrong object. Sin alienated our hearts from God. Our affections are turned from him, and ſeek for happineſs in creature-comforts.

And

And although daily diſappointed, yet they continue to ſeek it, until the Holy Spirit convince them, that they are ſeeking happineſs in a vain ſhadow, and diſquieting themſelves in vain. And when he has ſhewn them that nevertheleſs they may be completely happy in God the Saviour, and has ſtirred them up earneſtly to deſire his ſalvation, then he has prepared them to read this divine treatiſe with profit: the ſcope and deſign of which is to ſet before us Jeſus Chriſt as the only excellent and lovely object of our affections; and when we by the eye of faith behold him, and by the power of faith are united to him, then we know what the apoſtle meant when he ſaid, "To them that believe Jeſus is "precious;" and we can take up the words of the believer in the Song and declare, that he is altogether lovely, the chiefeſt among ten thouſand. And thus every other object will fade away in our eſteem, and grow mean and worthleſs in compariſon of God our Saviour; whereby we ſhall be able to enter into the ſpirit of the ſong. We ſhall know ſomething of that ſpiritual fellowſhip and communion of which it treats: for it dwells largely upon the mutual joys, and mutual praiſes of Chriſt and the believing ſoul, deſcribing the complete happineſs which they have in each other. This is the general plan of the book, which is very well expreſſed in the argument put before it, in the Bible that was in

uſe in queen Elizabeth's time—" In this Song, " Solomon, by moſt ſweet and comfortable alle- " gories and parables, deſcribeth the perfect love " of Jeſus Chriſt, the true Solomon and king of " peace, and the faithful of his church, which he " hath ſanctified, and appointed to be his ſpouſe, " holy, chaſte, and without reprehenſion. So " that here is declared the ſingular love of the " bridegroom toward the bride, and his great " and excellent benefits wherewith he doth en- " rich her of his pure bounty and grace, without " any of her deſervings. Alſo the earneſt affec- " tion of the church, which is inflamed with the " love of Chriſt, deſiring to be more and more " joined to him in love, and not to be forſaken " for any ſpot or blemiſh that is in her."

This was the judgment of our reformers—and they were not ſingular in it, as I purpoſe to ſhew under my third head, which was, to bring ſome arguments to prove, that this is the ſcope and deſign of the book.

The firſt argument, which would occur to every ſerious perſon, is the univerſal conſent of expoſitors. All the Jewiſh writers ſuppoſe it to treat of the ſpiritual union between Chriſt and the believer. All Chriſtian writers underſtand it in the ſame ſenſe. And the unanimous opi- nion of all learned and good men ought certainly to have great weight with us: for the ſcope and deſign of the book muſt be very plain and clear,

ſince

ſince there never was any diſpute about it in the church of God. This then being the received ſenſe, I may proceed to examine upon what principles it came to be ſo univerſally received. I ſuppoſe men were led to conſider it in this light from the eſtabliſhed method of explaining ſcripture; and this is the ſecond argument I ſhall uſe.

The ſcriptures are ſuited to man in his preſent ſtate. While he is here in the body he cannot converſe immediately with ſpiritual objects: he can only ſee them comparatively, as compared to and illuſtrated by material and ſenſible objects. The ſcriptures take this method of inſtruction. They teach us ſpiritual and heavenly things under their expreſſive images of nature. Whoever conſidered the ſcriptures in this light, could not reſt in the literal ſenſe of the ſong. He knew that all ſcripture had a ſpiritual ſenſe, and therefore in reading the Song he would conſider what the ſpiritual ſenſe could be, and he could not eaſily miſtake it, when he recollected what was the one great end and aim of all ſcripture. Every part of it was to lead men to ſome knowledge of Chriſt, which is the third argument tending to open to us the ſcope and deſign of this divine book.

Search the ſcriptures, ſays he of whom they write, for theſe are they which teſtify of me—The Song is part of theſe ſcriptures, and there-

fore

fore it teſtifies of Chriſt; and what other teſtimony does it bear of him, than in ſetting forth the love which he has for his faithful people?

The teſtimony of Jeſus, ſays St. John, is the ſpirit of prophecy. If you underſtand the prophetical ſpirit of this book, you will read in it the teſtimony of Jeſus: therefore if you don't ſee how it bears teſtimony to him, you have no inſight into its prophetical ſpirit.

Again we read, "That the holy ſcriptures "are able to make a man wiſe unto ſalvation, "through faith which is in Chriſt Jeſus: for all "ſcripture is given by inſpiration of God." (2 Tim. iii. 15, 16.) From whence I infer, that the Song being part of ſcripture, is given by inſpiration of God, and was therefore given, that it might make the man of God wiſe unto ſalvation, and this it does by eſtabliſhing him in the faith, which is in Chriſt Jeſus.

Another proof may be taken from the xlvth Pſalm, which is a ſong of loves. The ſubject and the manner of the compoſition are the ſame with this divine book. They treat of the love of Chriſt to his church, and after the manner of a dialogue, and the xlvth Pſalm is applied to Chriſt by an infallible interpreter. St. Paul in the 1ſt of the Hebrews and the 8th verſe ſays, that it was written of God the Son: from whence we may conclude, that the Song being upon the ſame ſubject, and drawn up in the

ſame manner, treats alſo of the love of God the Son to his faithful people. And to confirm the interpretation of theſe more general proofs, I may mention a fourth argument, taken from thoſe places of ſcripture wherein Chriſt is ſpoken of in the very terms uſed in the Song. The ſcripture often ſpeaks of him under the character of the bridegroom. In the 25th of St. Matthew we have the parable of the ten virgins who went out to meet the bridegroom, who in the 13th verſe is called the ſon of man. In the 5th of the Epheſians, St. Paul is treating of the love and union between huſbands and wives, and in the 32d verſe he ſays, "This is a great myſtery, but "I ſpeak concerning Chriſt and his church," in the ſame manner, and with the ſame expreſſions, which are uſed in the Song, and which are carried on through the New Teſtament: for thus we read in one of the laſt ſcenes of the Revelation of St. John, that the multitude of the heavenly hoſt cried aloud as the voice of mighty thunderings, ſaying, Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth, let us be glad and rejoice and give honour unto him: for the marriage of the lamb is come, and his wife hath made herſelf ready. And in the 21ſt chapter St. John informs us who the bride, the Lamb's wife is, the church, the Jeruſalem that is above, which is the ſpiritual mother of us all, even of

every one of us who ſhall be ſo happy as to be called to the marriage-ſupper of the Lamb.

From theſe authorities it appears to me undeniably evident, that it is common in ſcripture to ſpeak of Chriſt in the very ſame manner that he is ſpoken of in the Song; and therefore ſumming up all theſe arguments together, conſidering that the expoſitors, Jews, and Chriſtians, are agreed about the plan and deſign of it, and that the received ſenſe is agreeable to the general rule for interpreting ſcripture, and is founded upon clear reaſoning from many particular paſſages, and more eſpecially from thoſe paſſages wherein expreſs mention is made of Chriſt's love to the faithful, under the very images uſed to repreſent it in the Song, we may certainly from hence conclude, that the ſcope and deſign of this ſweet portion of ſcripture is to ſet forth in the moſt lively and affecting manner the mutual joys and mutual praiſes of Chriſt and the faithful.

Having thus far endeavoured to ſettle and eſtabliſh the principal uſe of this ſacred book, I come in the fourth and laſt place to reduce what has been ſaid into practice, and to draw ſome uſeful inferences from it.

The ſong, as you have heard, is of the nature of a parable, wherein ſpiritual things are deſcribed by material. It is one of the offices of the wiſdom that is from above, to underſtand a parable and the interpretation thereof. I have

endeavoured to give you the interpretation of one of the ſweeteſt of all the divine parables. And are there any of you, my brethren, who after what has been ſaid are not yet reconciled to this book? Do you think, that it had better have been left out of the ſacred volume? Conſider, that your opinion weighs nothing againſt the unanimous conſent of the church of God, and your opinion is founded upon your ignorance of the things of God. If you underſtood this book, you could not think meanly of it; but, in order to underſtand it, you muſt have ſome experience of that love of which it treats—having never taſted of it, you cannot enter into the ſpirit of the deſcriptions of it here made by Chriſt and by the faithful. Inſtead then of looking into the book for matter of cenſure, look into your own hearts, and beg of God to ſhew you how much you ſtand in need of having the love of Chriſt ſhed abroad in them; and whenever he enables you to ſay with the apoſtle, Jeſus Chriſt loved me and gave himſelf for me, then you will taſte and ſee how exceedingly ſweet every image and deſcription is in this divine Song.

If you cannot be perſuaded to deſire the love of God may be ſhed abroad in your hearts, you will entertain a mean opinion of this treatiſe upon it. But for the ſake of your dear and immortal ſoul, ſuffer not yourſelf to ſpeak irreve-

rently of it. If God ever revealed himſelf to man, this is part of his revelation. The holy and eternal Spirit, who inſpired all ſcripture, ſpake this by his unerring wiſdom. He is the author, and the ſubject is the deep things of God. Let not then a diſreſpectful word come out of your mouth againſt it. But if you will ſuffer your wit to run into licentiouſneſs, remember that you ridicule this book at the peril of your ſoul. You are guilty of blaſphemy againſt the Moſt High. And how can you think it ſafe to jeſt upon the Almighty, and to make ſport with his omnipotence? Why will you ſet God at defiance, and add freſh fuel to his wrath, as if all your other ſins would not ſink you deep enough into the pit of deſtruction? If you have any love left for your eternal intereſt, forbear this deſperate wit; and beg of God to enlighten the darkneſs of your underſtanding, that you may ſee the ſcope and deſign of this ſacred ſong. And to thoſe perſons who deſire this, I make my ſecond remark.

You do not clearly comprehend the things written in this book, but you deſire to comprehend them. If this deſire be from God, it will put you upon praying for the experience of that love which is here treated of. You may poſſibly come at the meaning of ſome things in it, but you cannot know them practically nor profitably, until you are taught them of God.

You

You cannot tell what the love of God is, until it be ſhed abroad in your heart. No deſcription can make you acquainted with it; and therefore look up to God who has it to give. Aſk him out of the riches of his grace to beſtow it upon you; and when he gives you the comfortable ſenſe of it, then you will have the beſt key to open the myſteries of this divine Song. And for your encouragement in ſeeking, remember that this love is free. Though it be ineſtimable, yet it is to be had without money and without price. God had no motive to ſhew it to ſinners but his own inherent mercy, and he waits for no merit or qualification in them: for it is to ſupply the want of all merit and qualification: and he has already begun to beſtow the riches of this free love upon you, by making you ſenſible of your want of it, and by putting you upon ſeeking for it. Wait upon him then in the ways of his ordinances, and he will finiſh what he has begun. He will enable you to love him, becauſe he firſt loved you. Aſk this out of a due ſenſe of your unworthineſs, and the Father for the ſake of his Son will ſhed abroad his love in your hearts by the Holy Ghoſt. And thus he will bring you into the happy number of thoſe believers, to whom I make my third and laſt inference.

You, my chriſtian brethren, can read this ſweet portion of ſcripture with delight and profit. You know it to be true by your own experience.

You

You look upon Jeſus Chriſt in the light here deſcribed: for he is your peace, and you find his dealings with your ſouls are the very ſame which the Song mentions. For what the Song ſays of the church in general, muſt he true of every individual who is a member of it—For the church is nothing more than a congregation of believers united by faith and by the bond of the ſpirit to Chriſt the head of the ſpiritual body, and by love to one another—United to him, as the members are to the head, and united to one another as the members are in the ſame body. What therefore is ſpoken in the Song of the whole church, as the ſpouſe of Chriſt, is true of every particular chriſtian. And what is ſaid of the church is briefly this: in the firſt chapter the church expreſſes a ſtrong deſire for nearer communion with Chriſt, and then there follows ſome declining of her affection. After this we have her recovery, a regaining of her firſt love: and yet ſhe afterwards declines again in her affection, her love grows cold, and ſhe falls into a ſtate of deſertion. Chriſt hides his preſence from her more than he did in her former coldneſs, and this continues, until perceiving Chriſt's conſtant affection to her, notwithſtanding her unkind treatment of him, ſhe recovers, and follows him more cloſely, and with a more conſtant love than before.

Theſe

Theſe paſſages agree with the experience of the beſt Chriſtians in the courſe of their own lives, and therefore the Song is not a dark unintelligible book to them. They find it to be an experimental treatiſe upon the love of Jeſus Chriſt to his people. And all of you, my chriſtian brethren, underſtand it in this light. You have read it with care, praying the holy inſpirer of it to enlighten your underſtandings, that you might ſee its true ſenſe and ſpiritual meaning; and he has opened to you the truth of its deſcriptions. The Holy Spirit has drawn you to Chriſt, and has made you happy in the ſenſe of his love, and thus he has given you the beſt comment upon the Song. The more he enables you to taſte of this love, the more clearly will you underſtand the Song. You will have the greater inſight into it, the nearer acceſs you have to the Father, with confidence through the faith that is in Chriſt: for what is written concerning communion with God muſt certainly be beſt underſtood by thoſe, who live in cloſe communion with him. This is your privilege. Remember how great and high it is, and act worthy of it. You have fellowſhip with the Father, and with his Son Jeſus Chriſt. The Holy Spirit is the bond of this communion, and therefore it is called the "communion of the Holy Ghoſt." Oh beware then of every thing that would grieve

or

or offend him. As his is an holy office, entirely relating to holineſs, nothing can diſpleaſe this Holy Spirit ſo much as ſin. He is of purer eyes than to behold the leaſt iniquity. The leaſt thought of ſin offends him: for it is ſin that pollutes his ſacred reſidence, and defiles the temple of the heart. Sin makes him withdraw and hide the light of his countenance, and with-hold the ſweet ſenſe of his comfortable preſence. Oh beware then, as you love your own peace of mind, as you love your God and his glory, as you love Jeſus Chriſt and his ſalvation, beware of the leaſt approach to ſin. Pray, watch, ſtrive againſt it. Reſiſt unto blood ſtriving againſt ſin. Wait upon God in all his ordinances to get power over it. And the more you are dead to ſin and alive unto God, the nearer fellowſhip will you have with the Father, and with his Son Jeſus Chriſt, and as this fellowſhip is the ſubject of the Song, you will therefore underſtand it the better, and experience more of its ſweetneſs.

My chriſtian brethren, you have taſted of its ſweetneſs. You know the loving kindneſs of the Lord, and if you would have the conſtant abiding ſenſe of it, earneſtly beſeech the Holy Spirit to keep you from offending him in thought, word, and deed. Intreat him to give you grace never to grieve him. Stand in awe, and ſin not. Sin is your great enemy. Nothing makes God hide

hide his face from you, but ſin. All the darkneſs and blindneſs, and depravity, that are in the ſoul concerning the things of God, come from ſin: from it came all miſery. Oh watch then and pray always againſt it. Pray that you may be kept from the works of darkneſs, and from every error and vice which would cloud the underſtanding, and hinder your reading this portion of ſcripture with profit. Look up to the Spirit of wiſdom, and intreat him to open to you the true ſenſe and meaning of the Song, and to give you the happy experience and comforts of its doctrines. And that we may all receive the benefits from it which he intended it ſhould adminiſter to his people, let us humbly aſk it of him in the words of our church, which hath taught us to pray, ſaying,

Bleſſed Lord, who haſt cauſed all holy ſcriptures (and this portion of them in particular which we have been conſidering) to be written for our learning; grant that we may in ſuch wiſe hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digeſt them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy word, we may embrace, and ever hold faſt the bleſſed hope of everlaſting life, which thou haſt given us in our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt. *Amen.*

SERMON II.

CHAP. I. VER. 4.

Draw me, we will run after thee.

THE Saviour of ſinners is God and man united in one Chriſt. As God he has all the perfection of heaven, and as man he has all the beauties of this earth; he has every grace of time, and every bleſſing of eternity, which ought to draw and to attract our love. But while men are in their natural unregenerate ſtate, they ſee none of his perfections and beauties. They behold no form nor comelineſs in him, that they ſhould deſire him. The world, and the things of it, appear more deſireable than he does. The baſe periſhing joys of ſenſe have the entire poſſeſſion of their affections. Sin is more lovely in their eyes than God the Saviour, and they give up their hearts to its enjoyments in preference to him and his heaven. While they continue to place their love on ſuch unworthy objects, they are incapable of judging of this divine ſong: for they are not only ſtrangers, but alſo enemies to that love, of which it treats; and how then can they ſee the beauties of its compoſition, or judge of the juſtneſs of its ſentiments? So long as they love ſin, they cannot love Jeſus Chriſt, and there-

fore

fore they cannot love the ſweet deſcriptions in this poem, which ſet forth the happineſs of loving him above all things. But when their eyes are opened to ſee the exceeding ſinfulneſs of ſin, and their hearts are once drawn from the love of ſin; when they have found that it cannot make them happy, then they are glad to hear of a Saviour; and when they have taſted of his love, then they begin to underſtand and to admire the beauties of this divine ſong, and the more they love him, the greater beauties do they find in it.

The ſubject of it is the union between Chriſt and the faithful ſoul. In this all the expoſitors of ſcripture, antient and modern, are agreed. It is a ſpiritual ſong, compoſed in the manner of a dialogue. The ſpeakers are Chriſt, and the believer. The inſpirer of it is the Holy and Eternal Spirit, who delivered it by the mouth of Solomon. He knew it to be true by his own experience, as every believer does to this day. After he had left God, he ſought for happineſs in the creatures, but was diſappointed. He turned from one object to another, tried the whole circle of worldly enjoyments, and as he paſt on he wrote upon each vanity and vexation of ſpirit. It pleaſed God to ſhew him his error, and to make uſe of him as a proper perſon to warn others, from ſetting their hearts upon any object but God; for if Solomon could not find

happineſs

happineſs in the world, what can the man do that cometh after the king? This is the ſubject of the book of Eccleſiaſtes. After Solomon had turned from theſe worldly vanities to ſerve the living God, he wrote this divine ſong, to ſhew what true happineſs he had found, and every believer will find, in being united to Chriſt in the bonds of love and affection. The Holy Spirit had drawn his heart from the love of all inferior objects to God the Redeemer, and had given him faith to ſee his own intereſt in what the Redeemer was to do and ſuffer for him. By theſe bonds the union was formed and perfected. The Holy Spirit on Chriſt's part, and faith on the believer's, united them to each other. And the believer here deſcribes what happy effects flowed to him from this union, and Chriſt deſcribes the delight he had in it. The deſcriptions of their mutual love and happineſs run through this ſong of loves.

The awakened ſoul begins with expreſſing its deſire to receive ſome ſenſible tokens of Chriſt's love in the ſecond verſe, ſetting forth the excellency of it in the third, and at the ſame time its own utter inability and inſufficiency to attain it, unleſs Chriſt would be pleaſed to draw the affections from all other objects unto himſelf—"Draw me," as it follows in the fourth verſe, "and we will run after thee."—Draw me, Lord Jeſus,

Jeſus, from the love of the world, and the things of it; draw me from the love of ſin and ſelf. I feel my bondage, I find that I am a ſlave, and am without ſtrength to deliver myſelf. O draw me then by the ſweet impulſe of thy good Spirit from my bondage and ſlavery. And when thou art pleaſed to ſet my feet at liberty, then we will run after thee; we in the plural number: for when the heart is once drawn after Chriſt, it commands all the faculties, and they which could not ſtir before now run, they which had no ſtrength now run againſt all oppoſition, they which were enemies to Chriſt, now run after him with joy in the ways of his commandments. Draw me by thy grace, and we, every faculty of ſoul and body, will obey, we will follow the divine attraction, and thou ſhalt be our God and king ruling over us, and getting thyſelf glory by ſetting up thy kingdom within us. May theſe be the deſires of all your hearts. While we are here met together, may the Lord Jeſus draw your thoughts from every vain and ſinful object, and keep them fixed upon this ſubject. Oh that he may ſend his good Spirit to open your underſtandings clearly to ſee, and to influence your affections readily to receive,

Firſt, The reaſons, which induced the awakened ſinner to deſire Chriſt would draw him.

Secondly, The ſcripture method of drawing the ſoul unto Chriſt.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, The certain effects which follow upon its being drawn. And then,

Fourthly, I will reduce these particulars to practice, and will apply them closely, as God shall enable me, to every one of your consciences.

And First, We need not look farther than the text for the reasons which induced the awakened sinner to desire Christ would draw him. He found he could not run after Christ, unless he was drawn: for although God be the fountain of all good to his creatures, and the God-man Christ Jesus be the fountain of all good to his sinful creatures, yet they are not willing to go and receive good at his hands. Sin has corrupted all the faculties of the soul, and has turned and alienated them from God; insomuch that they leave God to seek good in the creature, and idolize it by placing their happiness in it. The God of this world, and his riches, and honours, and pleasures have possession of their hearts, and the God of heaven, who promises them heavenly riches, and honours, and pleasures, has none of their affections: nay, they hate him. While they love present and sensual gratifications they are haters of God. They hate him, because their sinful nature is opposite to his perfect holiness, and because he has forbidden them these gratifications, which they are determined to enjoy; and they hate him the more, because he

he has threatened to puniſh them, and conſcience informs them that they deſerve the threatened puniſhment. This is the ſtate of all men by nature. They are lovers of ſin, and haters of God, Rom. i. 30. And until this hatred be conquered, how can they come to God with any kind of love? Their affections will lead them farther from him every ſtep they take, and how can they return, unleſs he draw them to himſelf? If they can but be convinced of the vanity and emptineſs of all theſe creature-comforts, upon which they have ſet their hearts, and can ſee reaſon to think that God will be reconciled and love them, notwithſtanding their former oppoſition to him, then they will be diſpoſed to ſeek his love; but until they be convinced of theſe two truths they cannot be drawn to ſeek happineſs in God.

This is the plain doctrine of ſcripture. Our divine Lord and maſter thus inſtructs his diſciples, John vi. 44. "No man can come unto "me, except the Father, which hath ſent me "draw him." No man, be he ever ſo moral, civil, and learned, let him have ever ſo many natural gifts and acquired accompliſhments, can come, has either will or power to come unto me for the graces and bleſſings which I have to give, unleſs the Father which hath ſent me draw him, by the ſweet attraction of his good Spirit

Our

Our church teaches the ſame doctrine in her tenth article. "The condition of man after the "fall of Adam is ſuch, that he cannot turn and "prepare himſelf by his own natural ſtrength "and good works to faith and calling upon "God: wherefore we have no power to do "good works pleaſant and acceptable to God, "without the grace of God by Chriſt prevent-"ing us, that we may have a good will, and "working with us when we have that good "will." Here we are taught, that man by his fall is turned away from God, and has no ſtrength to return, unleſs the grace of Chriſt go before to give him a good will, and then work with him when he has that good will. He has no ſtrength in any of his faculties: they are all turned from God, and the grace of Chriſt alone is able to draw them back again. The underſtanding has no light. It is entirely in darkneſs, as to the things of God (Eph. iv. 18.) and the eye of the mind can no more enlighten itſelf, than the eye of the body can enlighten itſelf without light. When the firſt ray of grace breaks in upon us, it finds us as it did the heathens at the coming of Chriſt ſitting in darkneſs and in the ſhadow of death. And unleſs the rays of his grace ſhine into the underſtanding, it cannot be enlighten-ed. Chriſt is the only light of the world. He is in the kingdom of grace, what the ſun is in nature. Stop the influence of his bright

beams, and the underſtanding will never ſee any reaſon to follow him, nor can the will chooſe him. The will of the natural man is depraved. It has a wrong biaſs, and is directly oppoſite to the will of God, and never can deſire to be reconciled, unleſs the Holy Spirit draw it.

But does not the Holy Spirit's thus drawing it deſtroy our free-will? By no means: for it cannot deſtroy what is not. Fallen man has no free will but to ſin; if that may be called free, "which is tied and bound with the chains of "ſin," as our church expreſſes it. The ſcripture is abſolutely poſitive upon this point, declaring (Rom. viii. 7.) "that the carnal mind," the will of our corrupt nature, "is enmity againſt "God: for it is not ſubject to the law of God, "neither indeed can be," until it be delivered from the bondage and ſlavery of ſin. It cannot be ſubject to the will of God, unleſs his grace draw it to himſelf: for by nature it is drawn to ſin. "The fleſh always luſteth againſt the ſpirit," ſays the ſcripture. "Fallen man is of his own "nature inclined to evil," as our ninth article teaches. We run faſt enough into evil. We want nothing to draw us. Sin ſtrikes upon our nature and catches, like a ſpark upon gun-powder. Surely we can all remember with what different tempers we uſed to go to the play-houſe, and to the church—how much greater delight

delight we took in ſpending an evening over the devil's books, at an innocent game at cards, as his children call it, than in reading the word of God.—And are there none of you, who now find more joy in many things, than you do in prayer? Theſe are evident proofs that you are ſtill governed by the will of the fleſh, which the ſcripture ſays luſteth always againſt the ſpirit, and therefore how can a deſire ever ariſe in it after God or the things of God, unleſs Chriſt draw it to himſelf? But the worſt part of our corruption conſiſts in the depravity of our affections: for they are alſo governed by the will of the fleſh, and are according to the apoſtle to be crucified (Gal. v. 24.) "And they that are "Chriſt's have crucified the fleſh with the affec-"tions and luſts." And they that are not Chriſt's are ſtill under the power of the affections and luſts of the fleſh. The heart, which is the commanding faculty, is in them ſhut againſt God, but is open to receive ſin, loves it, dotes upon it, yea is ſo enamoured of it as to prefer its ſhort and empty joys to the ſolid felicity of an eternal heaven. And what power is able to break theſe chains? Who can ſet our hearts at liberty, and turn them from ſin to righteouſneſs? Who, but the ſame God that created our hearts at firſt. He alone can draw the affections from the love of the world, and from the love of ſin and ſelf up to

the things above, where Chriſt ſitteth at the right hand of God.

Upon all theſe accounts it appears, that man is incapable even of going to Chriſt, and much more of running after him, unleſs he be drawn. The ſcripture is expreſs, "No man can come "unto Chriſt, except the Father draw him." Our church is clear in her opinion, "Such is "the condition of fallen man, that he cannot "turn himſelf to God, unleſs the grace of Chriſt "go before to give him a good will, and then "work with him when he has that good will." And this is alſo evident from matter of fact and from experience. We find, that all men by nature, inſtead of turning themſelves to Chriſt, who is the fountain of every good, turn to ſin which is the ſource of every evil. Among learned and polite nations profeſſing chriſtianity, there is the ſame ignorance of the things of God, as among the darkeſt heathens, the ſame depravity of the will, the ſame corruption in the heart and the affections: which are clear and full proofs of our inability ever to go to Chriſt, unleſs he draw us to himſelf. The ſpeaker in the text ſaw theſe proofs in a ſtrong light. He found his want of a Saviour, and he felt how unable he was to do any thing towards attaining or meriting the Saviour's love; he was quite helpleſs, and without ſtrength, therefore he begs the grace of

Chriſt would draw him. My brethren, are you in this ſtate? Do you ſee the reaſons, which I have now laid before you, in a clear and convincing light? If not, may the ever-bleſſed God of whom we are ſpeaking draw you by his grace unto himſelf; but if you are convinced, then you will gladly follow me to the conſideration of the ſcripture method of drawing the ſoul to Chriſt, and this is the ſecond point upon which I was to ſpeak.

It is evident fallen man wants drawing to Chriſt, becauſe the ſcripture has taught us the eſtabliſhed method by which he draws us. The ſeveral ſteps of it are there particularly marked out for our inſtruction, that we might be certain how the work of grace advances in our own ſouls. The word of God is the outward means of drawing us. The Holy Spirit applying the word is the inward means. He begins his application by awakening the careleſs ſecure ſinner, and by convincing him deeply and thoroughly of his being a ſinful helpleſs creature. He ſhews him how entirely he is departed from God, and how unable he is to return, and then he makes him deeply ſenſible of his miſery, until he does return. By which means the awakened ſinner finds his want of a Saviour, and it is the daily prayer of his heart, that he may find pardon and peace through the blood of the Lamb of God; but at the ſame time he feels ſo much of his corruption,

ruption, that he knows theſe prayers could never have ariſen in his heart, unleſs the Holy Spirit had begun to draw him unto Chriſt. He who could before boaſt of the light of nature, and of the great ſtretch of his reaſoning faculties, now finds nothing but blindneſs and darkneſs in his underſtanding. He who uſed to think highly of the dignity of human nature, and of man's rectitude, and of the moral ſenſe, &c. now ſees that his will is by nature inclined to evil, and that our dignity and rectitude, and moral ſenſe, are the mere chimeras of metaphyſical dreamers. Now he feels himſelf to be a poor loſt ſinner, whoſe heart and affections are ſo far turned from God, that unleſs the Holy Spirit create in him a new heart he can never return. Being thus convinced of his ſinfulneſs and miſery, and of his own helpleſſneſs to take one ſtep towards his deliverance, he is prepared for the next work of grace, which is to draw him and to unite him to Chriſt by faith. If the Holy Spirit had never convinced him of ſin, he would never have found any want of a Saviour; and if he had never ſeen his own helpleſſneſs, he would not have ſeen any neceſſity for being drawn to Chriſt by his grace; but being now convinced that he is both a ſinner and alſo a helpleſs ſinner, the deſires of his ſoul are drawn out after God, and he is in a right temper to wait upon God, until he be gracious unto him. And it is the office of the Holy

Spirit

Spirit to keep him waiting in the ways of the ordinances, until in God's due time he is ſent to convince him of righteouſneſs, and to bear witneſs with his ſpirit that the Father has accepted him and pardoned him through the merits of his beloved Son. Hereby he receives a well grounded faith in the obedience and ſufferings of Jeſus Chriſt. He can ſafely apply the merits of them to himſelf, and has great joy and peace in believing that they are imputed unto him for righteouſneſs. He has the ſure witneſs of this in himſelf, even the witneſs of the Holy Spirit, bearing teſtimony that Chriſt is his Saviour, and that God is his reconciled Father. This ſpirit of adoption enables him to cry Abba, Father, and to go to God with filial love and confidence. He now loves God becauſe he knows that God firſt loved him, and thus he is drawn to God by the cords of a man, by the bands of love, and is ready through grace to give outward evidence of the reality of the inward work, by running after Chriſt in the way of his commandments.

Thus the Holy Spirit is the convincer of ſin, and the convincer of righteouſneſs, and by theſe two convictions he draws the ſinner and unites him unto Chriſt. He ſhews him that he wants a Saviour, and then he ſhews him his intereſt in the Saviour. He firſt makes him feel that he is a loſt ſinner in himſelf, and then that he is ſaved by the righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt. This is the eſtabliſhed method, in which the Holy Spirit draws

draws the ſinner unto the Saviour, and this is a farther proof of its being neceſſary he ſhould be drawn, ſince the ſcripture has informed us both of the agent by whom, and alſo of the method by which he is drawn unto Chriſt.

My brethren, have you experienced this? Has the Holy Spirit drawn you from the love of ſin and ſelf? Have you left the world, and all that is called great and happy in it to follow Chriſt? Is no object more deſirable than he is, in your eyes? Can you take up the croſs, and run after him with joy, although reproach, ridicule, and oppoſition meet you at every ſtep? Examine your own hearts, and try them by the certain effects, which follow upon the Holy Spirit's drawing the ſoul to Chriſt; and this is the third particular in the text. "Draw me, and we will run after "thee."

The natural man cannot follow Chriſt, becauſe his heart and his affections are in another intereſt. He loves to follow the world and its pleaſures. And if he was convinced it was right to follow Chriſt, he would meet with many inſuperable difficulties, before he could ſet out and run after him. But when the Holy Spirit draws him, he then removes that unwillingneſs which made the way appear ſo difficult, and when he renews the faculties, he then gives them ſtrength to overcome every difficulty. By his grace the inbred oppoſition is ſubdued. The underſtanding is enlightened, and ſees the way clearly; the will

will follows it readily; the heart and the affections purſue it cheerfully. They follow their Lord and Saviour, whitherſoever he goeth. They run after him with eaſe, in the way that was before difficult; with pleaſure in the way, that was before painful; and with continuance in the way, wherein before they could not take a ſtep. When the Holy Spirit has drawn the ſinner to Chriſt, and really united him by faith to the head of the myſtical body, he is then a new creature; old things are paſſed away, behold all things are become new, both in his ſtate and actions. The branch of the wild olive tree is grafted in and partakes of the root and fatneſs of the good olive tree, whereby its nature is changed. There is a real and an entire change made, which appears evidently to the common obſerver, by the outward change in a man's life and converſation. He acts upon different motives to what he did before. He purſues different ends and by different means. Before he run after the world, now he runs after Chriſt. Chriſt is now become all his treaſure, and the heart will be where its treaſure is, and where the heart is, the other faculties will follow. No oppoſition ſhall diſcourage them. Let them be drawn and united to Chriſt, and none of his commandments will be grievous. Even ſelf-denial, the hardeſt commandment will be eaſy. Place the love of Chriſt in the heart, and the man who before ſhrunk

from

from and trembled at reproach, is nothing moved at it. He that was afraid of having his name caſt out with contempt, now can rejoice in being deſpiſed for Chriſt's ſake. He can give up his character; he was once reckoned a learned and a good man, but now he can bear to be called a madman and a fool. He takes up his croſs daily, and runs on rejoicing. The contempt of the world haſtens his ſteps. It ſpurs him on. It drives him nearer to his Saviour, and makes him live in cloſer communion with him. If worldly men knew what infinite ſervice they do us by their oppoſition, they would alter their behaviour; for they are our real friends, though they do not intend us any kindneſs. They make us ſit looſer and freer from the world than we otherwiſe ſhould do, and when we are willing ſometimes to take a little reſt, and our love and zeal begin to abate ſomething of their ardor, then they ſtir us up, and make us mend our pace homewards. Thus the Holy Spirit cauſes all things to work together for our good; even outward oppoſition, ſanctified by his grace, helps us forward, and enables us to run the faſter after Chriſt: And I hope there are many of us, who can ſay with the Apoſtle, that nothing ſhall ſeparate us from our bleſſed Lord and Saviour. —"I am perſuaded, ſays he, that neither tribu-
"lation nor diſtreſs, perſecution, famine, naked-
"neſs, peril or ſword, ſhall be able to ſeparate

"us

" us from the love of God, which is in Chriſt " Jeſus our Lord."

My brethren, if you have been drawn to Chriſt, have theſe effects followed? Are you running after him in the ways of his commandments, and running with delight, as after the greateſt happineſs you can enjoy in time and in eternity? If this be your ſtate, then in you is this ſcripture fulfilled. May he keep you by his almighty grace, and lead you on ſafely, until he draw you up to himſelf, and make you bleſſed with him for ever and ever. But if this be not your ſtate, then it is incumbent upon me to warn you of your guilt, and of your danger, and to call upon you by every thing that is dear and valuable, to reflect ſeriouſly upon the ſituation you are in; and this brings me to the fourth and laſt particular upon which I was to ſpeak. While I am applying it as cloſely as God ſhall enable me, Oh may he ſecond my application by his grace, and carry it with his effectual working to every one of your conſciences.

And firſt, in the ſpirit of love, I addreſs myſelf to thoſe perſons, whoſe affections are not drawn out after Chriſt, by the ſweet influence of his ſpirit. Although Chriſt has every beauty, every perfection in himſelf, and is willing to communicate to us of his fulneſs grace for grace, yet alas! few perſons deſire him, and fewer run after him. You may eaſily draw them to a play, to a concert,

concert, or to a ball; but to the God of all grace and glory, what arguments, what motives can draw them? Propoſe to them a fair opportunity of getting a great fortune, ſhew them the way to honour and grandeur, their hearts meet the propoſal with raptures: but change the diſcourſe, and offer to them the ineſtimable riches of Jeſus Chriſt, and the eternal honours and grandeur which he has to give, they feel no emotion. What can be the cauſe of this ſtrange inconſiſtency? Whence is it, that men who love pleaſure, ſhould nevertheleſs be ſo abſurd, as to prefer ſenſual to ſpiritual, and temporal to eternal pleaſures? Nay, ſo monſtrouſly and wickedly abſurd, as to let the love of the world ſhut out the love of that God who made it, and who will ſoon deſtroy it. What can be the reaſon of this? but that man is a corrupt fallen creature, depraved in every faculty of ſoul and body, inſomuch, that in ſpiritual matters he is as incapable of acting aright, as a dead man is of acting at all: for he is dead in treſpaſſes and ſins. Before he can move or ſtir a ſtep, he muſt be awakened, and convinced of his own helpleſſneſs. Then he will have reaſon to wait upon God for his help. But if he never finds himſelf ſick, he will never ſend for the phyſician. If he be never convinced that he cannot go to Chriſt unleſs he be drawn, he will never deſire the Holy Spirit to draw him. And if any of you be in this

caſe,

caſe, awake, thou that ſleepeſt in death. Oh, awake---awake---open thine eyes---and conſider thy guilt. Whither can ſin draw thee, but to hell? Conſider thy danger, how near thou art to it. Thy heart and affections have never been drawn after Chriſt; but they are ſtill placed upon thoſe objects, which draw the love of all natural men unto themſelves. Either money, or pleaſure, or ambition are their favourite purſuits, ſo far as to exclude Jeſus Chriſt, yea the very hungering or thirſting after him. You have not even a deſire to experience his love. And therefore you may be aſſured, that you have no work of grace in you. You are ſtill in your natural ſtate. At an infinite diſtance from God. You have the guilt of your nature and the guilt of your lives to anſwer for at his great tribunal. His holy law has already condemned you, and has paſſed ſentence upon you, threatening to pour out all its curſes upon your guilty heads. The righteous judge is bound to ſee them executed upon you. And you know not how ſoon he may call you to judgment. Oh may God rouſe up your fears, my brethren, and alarm you at the ſight of your danger. Shall you, who fly with eager haſte from temporal danger, be eaſy and careleſs, while the almighty God is your enemy, and he may this moment come and get glory to all his attributes by your everlaſting deſtruction? Can you think yourſelves ſecure in this caſe, while there

is only this little light vapour in your noſtrils between you and hell? Lord Jeſus forbid it. If any perſon hear me this day, who came hither without any intention to be made uneaſy about the ſtate of his ſoul, Oh let him now feel the miſery of being ſeparated from thee the fountain of good, and draw him to thyſelf, dear Lord, now draw his heart, from ſin, and ſatan, from the world, and the things of it, that he may follow me with profit, and be edified and comforted from what I have to apply,

Secondly, To thoſe perſons, whoſe deſires the Holy Spirit has begun to draw unto Chriſt. I hope many of you are brought thus far, and can truly ſay, "Draw me, and we will run after "thee." If you can deſire this ſincerely, then the Holy Spirit has already begun to ſet your hearts at liberty. Wait upon him, and he will enable you to follow Chriſt with delight, whitherſoever he calleth you. He will let you ſee ſo much of your want of Chriſt, and of his all-ſufficiency to ſupply your wants, that you will reſolve to give up all for him. You will ſee nothing more worthy of your purſuit, than the knowledge of your intereſt in Jeſus. There is indeed nothing elſe worth your purſuit. Unleſs you are found in him, God the Father is your enemy, as you are a ſinner in yourſelf; but when he ſees you in the Son of his love, a living member of his body, all his bleſſings are yours in

time

time and in eternity. Oh then be earneſt, be unwearied at the throne of grace, until you are drawn effectually to Chriſt, and by faith united to him. Whatever keeps you from him, pray that it may be removed. And be it ever ſo dear an object, a right hand or a right eye, look up to him, and he will give grace ſufficient for you. If it be ſin, he is almighty to ſave you from it. If it be great ſin, his merits and righteouſneſs are infinite. If they be many ſins, what proportion do they bear to infinity? Are you a poor loſt ſinner, did not he come to ſeek and to ſave that which was loſt? Are your ſins of a deep die? The greateſt have been pardoned. But none you think were ever ſo great as yours. How can that be? Is it not written, Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners, of whom I, ſays Paul, am chief. But ſtill the ſenſe of your great unworthineſs fills you with doubts and fears. You forget that Chriſt is the Saviour of the unworthy; and when he gives you Paul's faith, and you can ſay with him, Jeſus Chriſt loved me, and gave himſelf for me, then your doubts and fears will fly before it. Whatever keeps you from cloſing in with Chriſt, is an enemy to your ſoul. Pray therefore againſt it. Intreat the Holy Spirit to remove it, that you may be drawn to the loving Saviour of ſinners, and united to him by living faith. And until he produce this grace in you, ſeek him diligently in all his ordinances.

nances. They are the inſtituted means by which he draws ſinners to himſelf, and more cloſely unites believers. The word is the ordinance which he chiefly uſes to the awakening of ſinners. Glory be to him for that attractive virtue and powerful efficacy which ſtill accompanies the preaching of it. By his bleſſing it is daily effectual to the convincing and converting of careleſs ſinners, and to the building up, and eſtabliſhing of believers. Wait then under it, and look up to God for the quickening Spirit to enable you to mix faith with what you hear. Be much in prayer. Pray to have your affections drawn from the world, and fixed upon God. Seek his preſence in every ordinance, and when you find him in it, he will give you that grace which he intended it ſhould convey. And thus perſevere in the uſe of the means, until he bring you to the end. You ſhall find him whom your ſoul ſeeketh. He will draw you to himſelf, and then you will be able to run after him to whatever he calls you to do, or to ſuffer. I hope there are ſeveral of you in this happy condition, and to you, my chriſtian brethren, I addreſs myſelf in the third and laſt place.

You know the truth of this ſcripture by your own experience. Having been convinced that you could not come unto Chriſt, except the Father had drawn you by his good Spirit, you waited upon him, until he gave you faith, and

united

united you to Jeſus Chriſt: Being united to the Lord and giver of grace and glory, all things are become yours. You are now the ſons of God, and your heavenly Father will make all things work together for your good. You are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Chriſt: Oh remember then your privileges, and walk as children and ſons of the moſt high God. Keep near to your reconciled Father, and be ever looking to Jeſus your dear Redeemer, and ſeek to be drawn nearer to him daily by waiting upon him in his ordinances, that you may have more of his life and love. And let the great things he hath done for your ſouls be manifeſted by your outward walking. Shew that you have nearneſs to God the Father through the Son of his love, and acceſs with confidence through the faith that is in him. Let this appear by your living upon Chriſt's fulneſs, and receiving from thence grace for grace. And the more grace you receive, in the ſtrength of it run the faſter after Chriſt for more grace. Run in the ways of his commandments. Follow his example. Preſs cloſe after him in his ſteps. And be aſſured the cloſer you follow him upon earth, the nearer will you come to him in heaven. The more you are conformed to him in holineſs, the more ſhall you be like him in glory.

Happy are you, my chriſtian brethren, who have been thus drawn to Chriſt, and are thus

running after him. Hold on your courſe, determined in God's ſtrength not to ſtop upon account of what he ſhall either call you to do, or to ſuffer. Purſue the way of duty, in which Chriſt walked, whatever difficulties you may meet with, and fear not but he will give you ſtrength to go on conquering and to conquer. Whatever his will is concerning you, rely upon him, and he will make you more than conquerors. You know where your ſtrength is. God is your refuge and ſtrength. Go to him in every hour of temptation, and he will give you grace ſufficient for you. Aſk and you ſhall have. The Father will give whatever you aſk in his Son's name. This is your great privilege, and God grant you may ever make uſe of it in time of need. Let us now uſe it to crave a bleſſing upon what we have heard. And the whole of this diſcourſe is excellently ſummed up in the collect of our church for this day.

"Grant to us, Lord, we beſeech thee, the "Spirit to think and do always ſuch things as be "rightful, that we who cannot do any thing that "is good without thee, may by thee be enabled "to live according to thy will, through Jeſus "Chriſt our Lord. *Amen.*"

SERMON III.

CHAP. i. VER. 4.

The upright love thee.

THE firſt part of this verſe has been already conſidered. The perſon who ſpeaks it, perceiving the form and comelineſs of Chriſt, and finding a ſweeter ſavour in his name than in the moſt fragrant ointment poured forth, was deſirous of cloſe union and ſpiritual fellowſhip with him. But being ſenſible of his own helpleſſneſs to come to Chriſt, had therefore prayed he might be drawn, " Draw me and we will run after thee." The prayer was heard, and anſwered. Chriſt drew the ſoul by the cords of love unto himſelf, and as the following words ſhew, he brought it nigh, and gave it free acceſs with confidence through the faith that is in him. He ſhed his love abroad in the heart, which drew it out in love to him. The believer found himſelf enriched with ſo many graces, and enjoyed ſuch ſweet communion with Chriſt, that he rejoiced in him always, and declared that nothing but ſin and ignorance could hinder men from ſeeing and admiring the excellencies of Jeſus Chriſt. If they were not in a fallen corrupt ſtate, they would certainly admire and love him: for the upright love him.

If you were to aſk the generality of men, who call themſelves chriſtians, Whether they loved Chriſt? They would anſwer, What do you think we don't love our Saviour? Moſt certainly we do, for who can help loving him? We are taught to pray to him, and to love him from our very infancy, and we always have loved him.

But if you enquire upon what account they love Chriſt? What knowledge they have of him and of his ſalvation, and what proof they can give of their love to him? They are then at a loſs. They can only tell you, that their parents had them baptized, and brought them up in the church of England, and that they keep conſtant to their church, and have done their duty as well as they could, they never wronged any body, no one is without faults, and they have theirs. This is the religion of the greateſt part of our people, but how far ſhort is this of the ſcripture character of one that loves Chriſt? A man may do all this, and much more, without one grain of love. He may practice many duties in his natural fallen ſtate from ſeveral other motives than a ſenſe of love to Chriſt, and a ſingle eye to his glory. Theſe are the chriſtian motives to obedience, by which no natural man can be influenced. The Holy Spirit muſt have convinced him of his fallen ſtate, muſt have raiſed him from it, muſt have opened his eyes to ſee what Jeſus has

has done for his ſalvation, and muſt have ſhed abroad in his heart the love of God, before he can come up to the ſcripture character of them that love Chriſt: for they are upright who love him.

That we may have a clear and full view of the doctrine in the text, it will be proper to conſider,

Firſt, What is the ſcripture idea of the word upright.

Secondly, That man is not upright by nature.

Thirdly, That he muſt be made upright before he can love Chriſt.

Fourthly, That being made upright he will ſhew his love to Chriſt by walking in love; and in the

Laſt place, I will draw ſome practical inferences from the whole. And may the Spirit of grace accompany and bleſs our meditations upon theſe particulars: may he direct our hearts into the love of Chriſt, and render what ſhall now be ſpoken upon it the means of increaſing it in all our ſouls. Under his guidance let us conſider

Firſt, What is the ſcripture idea of uprightneſs.

The Hebrew word which is here tranſlated upright, is in the plural number. As a verb, it is rendered to make ſtraight, Iſaiah xl. 3, 4. "to

"direct in the way," Iſaiah xlv. 13. "and to "walk ſtraight in it," as 1 Sam. vi. 12. "And "the kine took the ſtraight way to the way of "Bethſhemeſh, and went along the highway, "lowing as they went, and turned not aſide to "the right hand or to the left." This is its received ſenſe in the lexicons; and from this idea the noun ſubſtantive is uſed for a directory, whatever guides in the right way, and the plural maſculine denotes thoſe perſons who are in the right way, and who walk ſtraight in it, whom we properly term upright men, alluding to their having been once in a fallen ſtate, and having loſt the right way, but being now raiſed up they are brought into it again, and made upright.

"Made upright," ſays our moraliſts, "how abſurd is this expreſſion! What neceſſity is there for making us upright? Are we not ſo by nature? Have not we all a moral rectitude? Have we not in ourſelves the rule of right, and obligations to follow it? We are moral agents and upright, why then do you talk of making men what they already are?"

This is the language of modern reaſoners, who would be wiſe above what is written. "For the ſoul that is lifted up, ſaith God, is "not upright in him." (Hab. ii. 4.) And yet the pride of their hearts loves flattering compliments, be they ever ſo falſe, and they are fond of

of being told of the dignity and rectitude of their nature, although theſe are mere metaphyſical chimeras. They are contrary to matter of fact, and to every day's experience, and contrary to the expreſs word of God, which proves that man is not upright by nature, as I am to ſhew under my ſecond head.

The whole volume of revelation gives us this character of mankind, "they have all ſinned, "and come ſhort of the glory of God." And what can be the dignity of a poor loſt ſinner, who has robbed God of his glory? And where is the rectitude of fallen man, of whom "there "is none righteous, no not one?" The ſcripture ſtrikes at the very root of our fancied dignity and rectitude, when it declares (Mich. vii. 2.) "there is none upright among men," no not one is there in the rectitude of nature, in which man was at firſt created: for "God hath made "man upright," ſaith another ſcripture, "but "they have ſought out many inventions," ſinful as well as fooliſh, which prove that they are not upright as they firſt came out of the hand of God. And indeed the ſcripture ſpeaks ſo much of the fall and corruption of nature, as if it left man without any power or ſtrength to recover himſelf. The prophet Jeremiah praying to God ſays, (x. 23.) "O Lord I know that the way of "man is not in himſelf: it is not in man that "walketh to direct his ſteps." To which agree

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the words of the apoſtle (Rom. iii. 9, &c.) "We "have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, "that they are all under ſin; as it is written, "there is none righteous, no not one, there is "none that underſtandeth, there is none that "ſeeketh after God, they are all gone out of the way:" ſo that there is no uprightneſs in any of them. Fallen man is gone out of the right way, and he does not underſtand how to return into it, nay he does not ſo much as ſeek after God, that he may be ſet right. His deſires and his affections are turned from God: they are ſet upon ſin, as our church expreſſes it in the ninth article, "Original ſin is the fault and corrup- "tion of the nature of every man —— whereby "man is very far gone from original righteouſ- "neſs, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, "ſo that the fleſh luſteth always contrary to the "ſpirit." How can man under the guilt of original ſin have any moral rectitude? Can he be upright who is very far gone from original righteouſneſs? Can he be in the right way who is very far gone out of it? And how can he be inclined to love Chriſt, who by the fault and corruption of his nature is always inclined to evil? While there is no fear of God before his eye how can there poſſibly be any love of God in his heart? The love of Chriſt is abſolutely inconſiſtent with the blindneſs and depravity of fallen man, who is in love with ſin. Sin and

Chriſt

Chriſt are as oppoſite as heaven and hell, to which they lead. And as fallen men are inclined to ſin, and love it, the fleſh luſting always contrary to the ſpirit, conſequently while they continue in this ſtate, they cannot love Chriſt; for none but the upright, who are raiſed from their fallen ſtate, love him.

Men and brethren, examine theſe authorities. Do they appear to you clear and deciſive? Here are the expreſs words of ſcripture, and the determination of our church upon this very point, declaring that man in his natural ſtate is not upright. I would infer from your preſence here that you do believe this truth, and if you do, may it be a practical belief. Act under the ſenſe of it. As you are convinced that you are not upright by nature, certainly you will ſeek to be made upright, and will therefore gladly follow me to the third point I was to conſider, viz. that you muſt be made upright before you can love Chriſt.

There is no other method, but what the goſpel propoſes. You would not go to the law, and ſet about keeping it more carefully for the future, in order to recover your rectitude; becauſe the law allows of no failing. Upon the firſt offence it puts you under the curſe, and condemns you. And as all have ſinned and come ſhort of the glory of God, therefore by the works of the law ſhall no fleſh be juſtified in his ſight.

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The law is a miniſtration of condemnation, it is uſeful to ſhew ſinners that they are not upright, but it can afford them no hope, neither doth it offer them any remedy. It can only ſcourge and wound the conſcience with the ſenſe of tranſgreſſion, and ſend the guilty to the goſpel, for the recovery of their uprightneſs. And the goſpel diſcovers to them the rich plan of grace, the covenant of the Eternal Three, with the diſtinct offices of each perſon in the œconomy of man's recovery. The Father's juſtice requires and receives, the Son's love pays, the Holy Spirit's grace applies, the atonement. The application is in the hand of the Spirit Jehovah. It is the work of his grace to apply to fallen man the benefits of the atonement, and to unite him by ſaving faith to Jeſus Chriſt, whereby he is made upright.

The ſcripture has laid down, and all the upright have experienced, the method which the Holy Spirit purſues in bringing fallen man into a ſtate of uprightneſs. Firſt he ſhews the ſinner his guilt and his danger, and lets him ſee that he is not upright. When the Holy Ghoſt the comforter is come, ſays our Lord, he will convince the world of ſin. When he comes to the natural man, he finds him ſecure and unconcerned about the ſtate of his ſoul or the pardon of his ſins: for the whole world lieth aſleep, yea dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, until awakened and

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quickened by the power of God's Spirit. He that can be heard even by the dead, calls, "Awake, thou that ſleepeſt, and ariſe from the "dead, and Chriſt ſhall give thee life." This awakens and alarms the conſcience. The ſinner is made ſenſible of his guilt and condemnation, and convinced of his helpleſsneſs, and thus humbled under the ſenſe of his want of uprightneſs, he is enabled to follow that divine teaching, which is to convince him where his wants may be ſupplied.

He hears the report of the goſpel, that all ſinners who are ſenſible of their wants may have them ſupplied out of the exceeding riches of Chriſt's grace, who has every thing to give that they can ſtand in need of. They may receive out of his fulneſs grace for grace. Are they ignorant of the things of God? He is an all-wiſe prophet to enlighten their underſtandings. Are they under the pollution and guilt of ſin, and under the condemnation of the law? He is an all-meritorious prieſt, whoſe blood can cleanſe them from the pollution and guilt of ſin, and by whoſe righteouſneſs ſinners are freed from the condemnation of the broken law, and ſtand accepted in the ſight of the holy God. Are they enſlaved and in bondage to their ſpiritual enemies? He is an almighty king, who can ſubdue in them the dominion of ſin. When the awakened ſinner hears theſe things out of the goſpel,

goſpel, he aſſents to them as truths, and the Holy Spirit draws his deſires out after the experience of them. As he is made to feel his wants, ſo doth he wiſh for a ſupply from Chriſt's fulneſs. He pants with fervent deſire and earneſt breathings of ſoul, to know his union with Jeſus by faith, and would gladly receive him in all his offices, as a king to ſubdue ſin in him, as well as a prophet, and a prieſt to free him from the guilt and deliver him from the puniſhment of ſin. The Holy Spirit cheriſhes and ſtrengthens theſe good deſires, and in his own good time he completes them, which is the third ſtep in the work of experience.

He convinces the awakened ſinner of righteouſneſs, by giving him faith to believe that the righteouſneſs of Chriſt is imputed unto him for juſtification to life. The ſcripture ſays expreſsly, that it is his office to convince men of righteouſneſs, and thereby to give them peace in believing, that God the Father is reconciled unto them through the righteouſneſs of his Son: "For "being juſtified by faith we have peace with "God through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt." (Rom. v. 1.) And when the mind is at peace with God upon account of its being juſtified by faith, then it is made upright, and the evidence of juſtifying faith is an upright walking. He that is in a juſtified ſtate is upright, and in conſequence thereof he will in his life and converſation walk upright-

rightly. As he has received Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, ſo he walks in him, and deſires to live to the glory of his divine Saviour. He would have every thought, and word and work a teſtimony of his gratitude. It is the prayer of his heart, that he may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleaſing, and may ſhew forth the praiſes of his God by being fruitful in every good work: for "this is the love of God, that we "keep his commandments, and (to the upright "who keep them out of love) his commandments "are not grievous."

My beloved brethren, conſider theſe things, and weigh them attentively. Have you been made to ſee the exceeding ſinfulneſs of ſin? That it has robbed you of your innocence and uprightneſs? That you are thereby expoſed to the condemnation of the law, and to the wrath of infinite juſtice? Have you fled for refuge to Jeſus? Do you perceive that he is the end of the law for righteouſneſs unto you? And therefore knowing yourſelf upright in him, can you ſay, Chriſt is precious; he hath made me upright, therefore I love him; it is the grief of my ſoul to offend him; it is the greateſt joy and delight of my heart to live and walk ſo as to pleaſe him? If you are as yet ſtrangers to this happy knowledge, deceive yourſelves no longer, do not think you have a ſincere love to Chriſt: for you know not the power of Chriſt's love to you. But if

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you have been thoroughly humbled, and convinced of your loſt helpleſs ſtate, and have received Chriſt and his righteouſneſs with love, joy, and peace, then being made upright, it is incumbent upon you to walk uprightly. It is your bounden duty to have a heart full of gratitude to God: and it is your privilege and happineſs to be able to expreſs your gratitude in your life and converſation. In them let it appear that you love Chriſt. Let the world ſee it in your chriſtian walking, and give them continual occaſion to glorify God on your account. And this brings me to the fourth particular I was to conſider, namely, that being made upright, you will ſhew your love to Chriſt by walking in love.

When love is in the heart, it will appear outwardly. It will have its proper works. It will manifeſt itſelf, like light, and ſpread abroad its ſweet influence. Light cannot propagate darkneſs, nor can the love of Chriſt produce hatred to his will: it is the doctrine of one apoſtle to his Coloſſians, chap. ii. 6. "As you have there-"fore received Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, ſo walk "ye in him;" and of another apoſtle, "If any "man ſaith, he abideth in Chriſt, he ought him-"ſelf alſo to walk, even as Chriſt walked." (1 John ii. 6.) He is to prove that he abideth in Chriſt by following Chriſt's example, and by walking in his ſteps: for as Chriſt has made him

upright, he will enable him to walk uprightly, becauſe his outward walking is to bring glory to God, and good to mankind. The love of Chriſt in the heart is that practical love which the apoſtle ſays is the fulfilling of the law: for it operates in the love of God and in the love of our neighbour, and on theſe two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

The upright man has a lively ſenſe of God the Father's being reconciled to him in Chriſt. Without this he could not love God: for a ſinner, conſcious of his having offended God and broken his holy law, can never be brought to love God until he be convinced that God loves him. He may as ſoon love pain and torments, as love an offended God, whoſe almighty juſtice is to get itſelf glory by his deſtruction; but when he is perſuaded that God is reconciled to him, then he has with joy and delight received the word of reconciliation: for "we love him," not abſtractedly, or metaphyſically, but experimentally, "becauſe he firſt loved us." And when the Holy Spirit ſheds abroad the love of God in our hearts, and reveals to them God's firſt loving us, then we ſee God in a new light. We look upon him as our reconciled Father and in this character he appears altogether amiable and lovely. Having taſted how good and gracious he is, we deſire from our hearts to pleaſe him, and this deſire will certainly operate

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in the two great commandments, the love of God and the love of our neighbour.

The upright man loves God and walks with God. Love attracts, and unites, and thereby produces communion. The believer has communion with the Father and the Son by the bond of the Spirit; from whence are derived to him all the graces and bleſſings of the goſpel, which he receives with a thankful heart, and ſhews his gratitude by loving what God loves. We know what God loves from his revealed will. This is the copy of his mind. And when the ſame mind is in us that was in Chriſt, then each of us ſhall be able to ſay, "I delight to do "thy will, O my God." The will of the upright man is reconciled to God's will, and therefore the way of the commandments becomes pleaſant. There may be difficulties in it, but his love rejoices to overcome them. His ſpiritual enemies may tempt him out of the way, but love ſets him above their temptations. When the world tries to ſhare his heart with God, he rejects its offers with ſcorn, for he remembers that if any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him. Does it offer him pleaſure? His love has found other kind of pleaſure than the world has to give, even pleaſures laid up at God's right hand for evermore. Does it offer him money? His affections are placed upon the unſearchable riches of Chriſt. There is his

heart

heart and there is his treaſure. Does it tempt him with honour? He deſires only the honour that is of God. And thus love arms him againſt the temptations, which try to make his will act differently from God's will. His love being ſincere he has upright intentions, has a ſtraight view of things, ſees them with a ſingle eye, and therefore is not eaſily drawn aſide. God's glory is his one great end and aim. He has reſpect to it in every thing he does, and is as careful of avoiding whatever tends to injure it, as if it were wounding the apple of his own eye. And thus the upright man ſhews his love to God agreeably to what is written, "If ye love me keep my commandments."

And his love to God not only enables him to do all things, but alſo to ſuffer all things. This is a very hard leſſon to fleſh and blood, but love makes it eaſy. Every diſciple of Chriſt is called to follow him in the way of ſuffering. The croſs is our portion. Self indeed would be gladly excuſed in the taking it up, but love to Chriſt enables us to deny ſelf, and to take up the croſs daily: "For love endureth all things." (1 Cor. xiii. 7.) Love can endure the ſharpeſt croſs, and chriſtians have rejoiced and been exceeding glad in bearing it. They have had trials of cruel mockings and ſcourgings, yea moreover of bonds and impriſonment—They were ſtoned, they were ſawn aſunder, were tempted, were ſlain with

the ſword—They wandered about in deſerts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth, deſtitute, afflicted, tormented; and yet they were happy under all their ſufferings. Many waters could not quench their love, nor could the floods drown it: for they loved not their lives unto the death. In the very flames they triumphed in their love to Chriſt, and in whatever ſhape death came they rejoiced in it, becauſe it would bring them to their beloved Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt. And thank God we have ſtill ſome men of the ſame ſpirit, who know in whom they have believed. Chriſt is dearer to them than life; and if he ſhould call them to give proof of it, his ſtrength would be perfected in them, and he would enable them to ſay with the apoſtle—"Who ſhall ſeparate us from the love of Chriſt? Shall tribulation, or diſtreſs, or perſecution, or famine, or nakedneſs, or peril, or ſword? Nay in all theſe things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us: for I am perſuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things preſent, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature ſhall be able to ſeparate us from the Love of God which is in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord."

And after the upright man has thus learnt to do and to ſuffer all things out of love to Chriſt, he

he will certainly keep the ſecond great commandment, which is like unto the firſt, and love his neighbour as himſelf. There is no brotherly love in the natural man. He may talk and write about it, but he cannot practice it ſincerely and diſintereſtedly: becauſe his views are narrow and ſelfiſh. St. Paul's character of the Romans, (chap. i.) is true of all natural men; they had every temper that was hateful, and they were haters of God and hating one another. But how then is brotherly love to be attained? It is from above, from whence cometh every good and perfect gift. The apoſtle Paul ſays, we muſt be taught it of God (Theſſ. iv. 9.) And another apoſtle ſays, "Let us love one another, for love "is of God; and every one that loveth is born "of God and knoweth God." From theſe ſcriptures it is evident, that God teaches us brotherly love, and when we are born of God, are made his adopted children in Chriſt, and know him to be our loving Father, then have we that faith which worketh by love, to God and to man. This working love prays for, and labours to ſerve both their ſouls and bodies. It goes about doing them good, ſeeking opportunites, and willingly neglecting none. This is the upright man's walking with reſpect to his neighbour. He is knit to him in love, and ſhews it by the labour of love, by doing every kind and good office that is in his power. And thus he walks

in love, as Chriſt hath loved him, which is the higheſt degree of brotherly love: for it is our Lord's new and great commandment, that we ſhould "love one another as he hath loved "us."

Judge now, whether there be not good reaſon for the aſſertion in the text, "The upright love "thee?" Can ſinners be ſenſible of Jeſus's having done ſuch great things for them, can they experience ſuch a happy work wrought in them by the Divine Spirit and not love God? It is impoſſible. They have been made thoroughly ſenſible of their being by nature eſtranged from God, and wanderers from the right way, and of their having no power in themſelves to return into it again. They found that they had no uprightneſs in them: for they loved what God hated; yea they hated God himſelf, becauſe he is the juſt avenger of ſin. But upon hearing the report of the goſpel, that Chriſt will receive all ſinners who come unto him, they were ſtirred up to come. And they waited upon Chriſt, until the Holy Spirit brought them good tidings of great joy. He ſhed abroad the love of God in their hearts, bearing teſtimony with their Spirits, that God was their reconciled Father, and they were his adopted children in Chriſt. And being thus made upright before God, in the ſtrength of the Lord they walk uprightly. In their lives and converſations they make the two

commandments, upon which hang all the law and the prophets, the rule of their actions, loving the Lord their God with all their hearts, and with all their ſouls, and with all their ſtrength, and their neighbour as themſelves. And thus they give evidence of their love to Chriſt. This is the doctrine from which in the fifth and laſt place I am to draw ſome practical inferences.

And is what you have now heard agreeable, my brethren, to your experience? If it be, you are ſafe and happy. If it be not, I beſeech you ſuffer the word of exhortation. It is an awful and a ſolemn word, and may God accompany it with the effectual working of his power. If you were upright, you would love Chriſt, but as you do not love him, hear and tremble if you have any love left for your poor ſouls—" If any " man love not the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, let him " be anathema maranatha." (1 Cor. xvi. 22.) Conſider what it is to be under an anathema, to be curſed of God—curſed by his holy law; and to be finally excommunicated by that ſentence which is never to be reverſed—" Go ye " curſed into everlaſting fire." If you make light of this at preſent, yet unleſs you repent, a time will come when you will wiſh you had never been born, rather than have died under the anathema of God. Oh may he now touch the hearts

of

of thoſe ungrateful men who love not the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and may he of his grace and bounty give them to taſte of that love, which paſſeth knowledge. May he that heareth prayer hear and anſwer, while I am ſpeaking a word to the formaliſt, who has ſomething of the ſhew, but no more of the power of divine love, than the careleſs ſinner.

The formaliſt is rather decent in his outward behaviour—he attends regularly upon the ordinances—goes a great way in outward matters, and has the air and appearance of a chriſtian. If you aſk him whether he loves Chriſt, he is very confident he does, and is ſomewhat offended that you ſhould ſuſpect his love; but bring it to the teſt of ſcripture and it will not ſtand the trial; for the formaliſt not only has not that true love of God, of which the ſcripture treats, but he is alſo an enemy to it. He is the firſt to cry out enthuſiaſm, if he hear, that the love of God ariſes from the knowledge of our being reconciled to him in Chriſt. It is with him the very mark of this new religious madneſs for any man to ſay, that he loves God from a ſenſe of his having freely forgiven him all treſpaſſes. So that the formaliſt, with all his outward decency and profeſſion, is rather farther from the true love of God than the careleſs ſinner: for the one has it not, but the other thinks it enthuſiaſm and mad-

neſs

neſs to pretend to have it. And yet the ſcripture is full of this enthuſiaſm. It has thus aſſigned the grounds and reaſons of our love to God, "We love him, becauſe he firſt loved "us."—Here we are taught, that our love to him ariſes from his firſt loving us; but how can we know he firſt loves us, unleſs he manifeſt it, and ſhed it abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghoſt. And in this way he does manifeſt it. He ſends his good Spirit into our hearts to let us know that he firſt loves us. Hear ye formaliſts, the expreſs teſtimony of God's word: "The "love of God is ſhed abroad in our hearts by "the Holy Ghoſt, which is given unto us." (Rom. v. 5.) And until the Holy Ghoſt give you this love, be ye ever ſo decent in your outward walking, you have none of the life and power of religion, but are dead in your ſins. This is the opinion of our church concerning you: for thus ſhe teaches you to pray—O Lord, who haſt taught us, that all our doings without charity (or love) are nothing worth: ſend thy Holy Ghoſt and pour into our hearts, that moſt excellent gift of charity (or love) the very bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whoſoever liveth is counted dead before thee, &c. (Collect for Quinqageſima.) Charity ſignifies nothing more than love. And in this collect the ſenſe, as well as the epiſtle to which it refers, determine

determine it to be the love of God; and if you have not this love poured into your heart by the Holy Ghoſt, let whatſoever elſe be in your heart, you are counted dead before God. Oh that he may bring you out of that dead lifeleſs ſtate, in which you are at preſent, and raiſe you up to newneſs of life, and place you among the upright who love Chriſt. And

Whatever others may do, the upright will love Chriſt. Though other men may ſee no form nor comelineſs in him that they ſhould deſire him, yet in their eyes he is altogether lovely. They love him for making them upright, and they give evidence of their love by walking uprightly. His will is theirs. They love what he loves. His revealed will is the copy of his mind, and therefore it is the rule of their converſations. Being made upright, and the ſame mind being in them that was in Chriſt, there will be the ſame outward walking. They will follow his example, and tread in his ſteps: for how can their love to Chriſt act againſt its own nature, ſo as to hate this will? Certainly therefore their love to him will ſhew itſelf in love to his commandments. And if a man ſay, I love Chriſt, and hateth his commandments, he is a liar, for he that loveth not the will of God, how can he love God? And this commandment have we from him,

him, that he who loveth God loveth his commandments alſo.

Is this your experience, my brethren? Enquire ſtrictly, and intreat the Holy Spirit to help you in inquiry, whether Chriſt has made you upright, and you therefore love him and his commandments. I have put you upon this enquiry, becauſe the ſcripture puts you upon it, and becauſe there is a general miſtake concerning it. The ſcripture has expreſsly mentioned the effects, which will flow from the love of Chriſt in the heart; theſe effects we deſire you to manifeſt in your lives. We do not ſend convinced ſinners to the law, and tell them, If ye would enter into life, keep the commandments. No. We ſend them to Chriſt, becauſe they have broken the commandments, and they muſt be pardoned, and receive juſtification to life from him, before they can keep any one commandment well-pleaſing to God. But when the Holy Spirit gives them the knowledge of their pardon and juſtification, then they receive a faith that worketh by love, a faith that proves itſelf to be from God by working in love to what God loves. Theſe workings of faith by love to God and man are the marks and evidences we deſire to ſee in your lives and converſations. We are authoriſed from God's word to call upon you for them, not as if they were your ſalvation, but as the certain

effects

effects of your being in a ſtate of ſalvation. The ſun cannot be without ſending out light: ſo love cannot be without producing its proper works,—works as certainly flowing from it, as light does from the ſun. If works flow not out, we are certain there is no love in the heart: for there is no cauſe, if there be no effects. Examine then, I beſeech you, the nature of the love which you think you have to Chriſt; ſee if it has the ſcripture marks of true love. Happy is he who looking into his own breaſt is able to ſay, "Lord, "thou knoweſt all things, thou knoweſt that I "love thee: whom have I in heaven but thee, "and there is none upon earth I deſire in com-"pariſon of thee." My brethren, can you take up theſe words, and repeat them with praiſe and thankfulneſs? If you can, may you go on rejoicing, daily receiving larger meaſures of divine love, and bringing forth richer and riper fruits to the glory of God. But if you cannot, do you ſee your want of love to Chriſt, and are you hungering and thirſting after it? If you are, look up and aſk it of the God of love. Pray him to beſtow it upon you out of the riches of his free grace. And let us all with one heart and one voice intreat him in the words of our church to give us the experience of what has been now ſaid, praying as ſhe hath taught us—"O almighty God, "who alone canſt order the unruly wills and af-

"fections

" fections of ſinful men: grant unto thy people,
" that they may love the thing which thou com-
" mandeſt, and deſire that which thou doſt
" promiſe, that ſo among the ſundry and mani-
" fold changes of the world, our hearts may
" ſurely there be fixed where true joys are to
" be found; through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.
" *Amen.*"

SERMON IV.

CHAP. I. VER. 7.

Tell me, O thou whom my ſoul loveth, where thou feedeſt, where thou makeſt thy flock to reſt at noon.

THESE words are part of a prayer, which the faithful offer up to the great and good ſhepherd. He had drawn them to himſelf, had pardoned all their wanderings, and had ſhed his love abroad in their hearts, which made them pray for his ſupport and defence. They ſtill found that they had many wants, for which they expected a ſupply out of his fulneſs, and many infirmities, from which they deſired deliverance in his ſtrength. His grace was needful every moment. That ſpiritual and divine life, which he had begun in their ſouls, could not be carried on without his continual help. They wanted the bread that cometh down from heaven, and which is the life of the ſpirits of men, as much as they want the bread which is the life of the body. And in time of trouble they wanted divine ſtrength. When aſſaulted with powerful temptations from within and from without, they durſt not think of attacking them, and much leſs of overcoming them with the arm of fleſh, but they

ſought

ſought to be ſtrong in the Lord and in the power of his might. This is the ſubject of the words now read; in which the faithful pray the great and good ſhepherd to tell them where he feeds his flock, and where he ſhelters them from the ſcorching heat of the ſun at noon---" Tell " me, O thou whom my ſoul loveth, where " thou feedeſt, where thou makeſt thy flock to " reſt at noon." Here we have

Firſt, The amiableneſs of Chriſt's paſtoral office; every faithful ſoul can ſay to the good ſhepherd, " O thou whom my ſoul loveth."

Secondly, The reaſon aſſigned for loving him, he feedeth his flock like a ſhepherd. And

Thirdly, He gives them comfort and ſtrength in the time of great trials, he makes his flock to reſt in the burning heat at noon. And

Fourthly, He ſaves his flock from the great trial of all, from death.

And while I am ſpeaking to theſe particulars, may the Spirit of the living God apply them to all your hearts. May he convince you practically of the amiableneſs of Chriſt's paſtoral office, that you may be able to ſay from your own experience, " O thou whom my ſoul lov- " eth." Chriſt is the good ſhepherd, and in this character he is altogether lovely. It is one of the ſweeteſt relations that he ſtands in to his people, and is to them the fulleſt of comfort; but

but then they muſt derive their comfort from knowing him to be their ſhepherd, and themſelves to be his people and the ſheep of his paſture. Without this knowledge, ſpeaking of his lovelineſs would be like talking in an unknown tongue: for what excellency can ſinners ſee in him that they ſhould deſire him, if they were never convinced that they were loſt ſheep, who muſt for ever periſh, unleſs the good ſhepherd bring them back again into his fold? They ſee no form or comelineſs in him, until they begin to find their want of him, and therefore when grace comes, its firſt work is to convince them of their wants. The firſt ſtep it ſets them in their way to God is to make them ſenſible of their having wandered from him. And all of you, my brethren, whatever your ſtate may be at preſent, had wandered from God. You had gone every man after the error of his own ways, and in the maze of theſe errors you had wandered ſo long that you were quite loſt. You could not diſcover the way back again to God, or if any one was to ſhew it you, you had neither will nor power to take one ſtep in it. Sin had impaired, yea had deadened the faculties of the ſoul. It left the underſtanding in darkneſs, the will corrupt and always inclined to evil, and the heart and affections at enmity with God. In this loſt and helpleſs ſtate, and this is the ſtate of every man by nature, you were like ſheep that have

wandered

wandered from the fold. This is a common image in ſcripture. Fallen man is there compared to a loſt ſheep, and this is a juſt and beautiful picture of him: for ſheep, as you all know, are ſimple weak creatures, who have neither force to reſiſt their enemies, nor wiſdom to avoid them; they want ſagacity to find out the beſt paſtures, to defend themſelves from the inclemency of the weather, and to find the way back again to the fold after they have once ſtrayed from it. There is not a creature in the world more helpleſs than a loſt ſheep. It muſt periſh unleſs the ſhepherd ſeek it out and bring it back. Now all the ſons of Adam are in this loſt and helpleſs condition, and the firſt ſtep towards their deliverance is a conviction of their not being able to do any thing towards delivering themſelves. Whether they be learned or unlearned, rich or poor, they are alike wanderers from God, and alike unable in their own ſtrength to return. It is exceeding difficult to convince natural men of this truth, and yet the goſpel can do them no good, until they be convinced. They muſt ſee, that they are poor loſt ſheep before they will ſeek after the ſalvation which the great ſhepherd has purchaſed for them; and becauſe it was neceſſary they ſhould ſee themſelves in this ſtate, God has therefore been pleaſed to give them abundant proof of their being in it. The prophet David ſays (Pſalm cxix. 176.) "I

"have

" have gone aſtray, like a loſt ſheep, ſeek thy " ſervant." But leſt this ſhould be thought his own particular caſe, God by the mouth of another prophet declares that it is the caſe of us all. " All we like ſheep have gone aſtray, we " have turned every one to his own way " (Iſaiah liii. 6.) Here all men without exception are ſaid to have gone aſtray like ſheep, and to have turned from the way of God to their own ways, and naturally they are like loſt ſheep, helpleſs and unable to return. The people of the Jews were certainly in this condition: for our Lord ſays, he was ſent to the loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael, and not to them only, as if they alone were loſt: for " other ſheep," ſays he, " I have, which are not of this fold, them " alſo I muſt bring," back again to God from their wanderings, therefore they were loſt ſheep as well as the Jews, " and there ſhall be one " fold and one ſhepherd."

If the ſenſe of theſe ſcriptures was not clear, and their authority deciſive, I might bring more proofs, but I hope theſe are ſufficient. They muſt be ſatisfactory to the members of our church, becauſe this is her eſtabliſhed doctrine both in her articles and homilies. The homilies upon the miſery of man are written entirely upon this ſubject, and the tenth article ſays, that ſuch is the condition of man after the fall, that he cannot turn or prepare himſelf to any good, unleſs the

grace

grace of Chriſt go before to give him a good will, and then work with him, when he has that good will. If you never found yourſelf unable to do any good unleſs Chriſt ſhould give you both the will and the power, you may call yourſelf a member of our church, but you are indeed a ſtranger to her conſtitution. And though you attend upon her ordinances, and take her words in your mouth, yet you deny them in your heart. What a mockery is it of God for a man to come to church, and upon his bended knees in the preſence of an all-ſeeing God to declare (which you have all done this day) "Almighty and moſt "merciful father, we have erred and ſtrayed "from thy ways like loſt ſheep," and afterwards to confeſs "There is no health in us." Is not this mocking God to his face, if a man does not believe, or does not experience what he ſays? Let every perſon, who would be thought a member of our church, weigh the force of theſe words, and if he cannot ſubſcribe to his being a wanderer from God, and as unable to return as a loſt ſheep, never more let him join with us in our church's confeſſion, until he can ſay from his heart, that he has erred and ſtrayed from God's ways, like a loſt ſheep, and has no health in himſelf, or ſtrength to return.

It is then a plain matter of fact, that fallen man is in a loſt helpleſs condition. He is in it, but the worſt part of his fall conſiſts in his being

inſenſible of his danger. He is loſt, but he does not know it; he is helpleſs, but his pride gives him high ideas of his own ſtrength. While he continues in this ſinful ſecurity, he ſees no want of a ſhepherd; and though he never ſends up one wiſh or prayer for help, yet the great and good ſhepherd does not forget his own. He is Jehovah, the true ſelf-exiſting God, the creator of all things viſible and inviſible; and this almighty and eternal Being vouchſafes to reveal himſelf to his people under the ſweet and amiable character of a ſhepherd. Whatever is lovely in an earthly ſhepherd is to be found ſpiritually in our incarnate God. Is it expected of a ſhepherd, that if he loſe any of his flock he ſhould ſeek diligently until he find it? Is he to ſpare no pains, to refuſe no difficulty or danger in ſearch of it? Herein we have a beautiful image of our Lord's paſtoral love. He looked down from heaven upon the children of men, and ſaw them wandering every one after the error of their own ways, he ſaw that deſtruction and miſery were in their ways, he ſaw the enemy of their ſouls, like a roaring lion, going about and ſeeking whom he might devour. His eye pitied them. At the ſight of their loſt and helpleſs condition the bowels of his tendereſt compaſſion were moved. He could not ſee them periſh; and therefore he came down from his eternal throne, veiled the brightneſs of divine glory under

der a tabernacle of fleſh, humbled himſelf to the loweſt abaſement, to be born a ſervant under the law, to ſuffer, to die, yea the accurſed death of the croſs. To this infinite condeſcenſion he ſtooped in order to ſave his loſt ſheep. This he expreſsly declares was the gracious purpoſe for which he came into the world: "The Son of "Man is come to ſeek and to ſave that which "was loſt." Even they whom he has ſought and ſaved were loſt as well as others, and as helpleſs as loſt ſheep. They had no deſire, and much leſs power to return to God, but were pleaſing themſelves with the errors of their own ways, when the Lord Jeſus ſtopt them. He called to them, and gave them ears to hear. He ſpake, and gave them hearts to obey. He drew them to himſelf, and ſaved them with a great ſalvation. And thus he was found of them that ſought him not. And whoever thou art, whom he has ſought, thou haſt been made to ſee thy wanderings. If thou art indeed brought home to God, thou haſt been deeply humbled for thy turning away from him; and thou art convinced that if Jeſus Chriſt had not come down from heaven to ſeek thee, thou muſt have been loſt for ever and ever. But now, being ſought out by his tender care, and found, thou canſt tell of the love of this good ſhepherd, who has not only brought thee home to God, but has alſo pardoned thee, waſhed thee clean in his own blood,

and juſtified thee with his infinite righteouſneſs. Thou art now admitted into his fold, and the ſenſe of what he has already done for thee will enable thee to go to him continually with faith, and ſay, "Tell me, O thou whom my ſoul loveth, "where thou feedeſt; from what I have already "experienced of thy love, I doubt not but thou "wilt feed me with the bread that endureth "unto everlaſting life." And this leads me ſecondly to conſider a reaſon here aſſigned for loving him, namely, that he feedeth his flock like a ſhepherd.

The earthly ſhepherd is not only to bring back the loſt ſheep, but it is alſo part of his paſtoral office, to provide for its future ſupport. He is to ſee that it lack nothing, but is to feed it in green paſtures, and to lead it beſide the ſtill waters. And herein we have a lively picture of our Lord's paſtoral love. When mankind left God and turned into the ways of ſin, they loſt that divine ſupport, which is the happineſs of the ſoul, and they were ſeparated from the fountain of life. The apoſtle ſays, they were alienated from the life of God. And they had no means to recover it, nor indeed any ſenſe of their want of it. They were laying dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, when the Lord Jeſus brought it down for us from heaven, and they are ſtill in this dead ſtate, when he ſends his good Spirit firſt to convince them how much they want it,

and

and then freely to beſtow it upon them: "For "the bread of God (that bread which ſupports "the life of God in the ſoul) is he, which "cometh down from heaven, and giveth life "unto the world." This is our Lord's account of himſelf. He came down from heaven to give this bread of God unto a world dead in ſin, and whenever a ſinner receives it of him, then he begins to live unto God. This bread is the ſupport received from Chriſt's body and blood, from the merits of his obedience and ſufferings, which are applied to the ſinner by the Holy Spirit, and made effectual by the reviving ſtreams of his grace. And this method of feeding his flock is beautifully painted in the 23d Pſalm; the truth of which every believer experiences as well as David, and can therefore truly ſay, "The Lord is my ſhepherd, therefore can I lack "nothing: he ſhall feed me in green paſtures, "and ſhall lead me forth beſide the waters of "comfort. He ſhall convert my ſoul, and lead "me in the paths of righteouſneſs for his name's "ſake." The ſheep of the Lord's paſture lack nothing: for he ſupports them with all things that pertain to life and godlineſs; and when they find themſelves thus ſupported, they will be full of love to their good ſhepherd, and they will love the means, which he has appointed to convey nouriſhment to his flock. In theſe means they have grown in grace, their love has increaſed,

and

and their hearts have been more inflamed with pure affection to their divine ſhepherd, and therefore they can always join with the believers in the text in deſiring to be led by his grace, to the places and means, in which he feeds his flock. "Tell me, O thou whom my ſoul loveth, where "thou feedeſt thy people, and the ſheep of thy "paſture."

My brethren, can you join with them? Is the good ſhepherd altogether lovely in your eyes for giving you the bread of God which cometh down from heaven? Have you received it from him? Do you find it ſtrengthening your hearts, enabling you to die more to ſin, and to live more to God, to get power over inward corruption, and outward oppoſition. Happy are ye, if this be your caſe, for you need not fear his comfort and ſtrength in time of great trials and troubles, as it follows in the third part of my text, he will make his flock to reſt in the burning heat at noon.

The heat of the ſun at noon is in Judæa very violent and ſcorching. The faithful ſhepherd will take care to drive his flock during theſe ſultry hours to ſome cool ſhade. There he will defend them from their enemies: for they are weak and defenceleſs themſelves. All the beaſts of prey can with eaſe devour them, and in hot countries where the beaſts of prey abound, the ſhepherd is forced to watch his flock in the cold

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of the night, as well as in the heat of the day: for thus we find Jacob deſcribing his care of Laban's flock, "I was in the day conſumed "with heat, and with froſt in the night, and my "ſleep departed from mine eyes." And in the New Teſtament we read, that in the depth of winter, when our Lord was born, there were ſhepherds in the open field watching over their flocks by night. How beautifully is our Lord's paſtoral care hereby repreſented? For the ſhepherd of Iſrael never ſlumbers nor ſleeps, watching over his flock continually night and day, and he ſuffers no enemy to come near to hurt them. He himſelf is a ſhadow in the day-time from the heat, and a ſafe refuge from the power of all their enemies. They have a formidable hoſt to contend with. Sin, and ſatan, and the world, and the temptations and troubles in it, had taken captive the loſt ſheep, and law and juſtice allowed them to be kept in bondage, until death ſhould ſeize upon them, and deliver them over to the place of torments, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. From theſe enemies the Lord Jeſus came to ſave his flock. He ſubdued all theſe enemies in his own perſon, and does ſubdue them by the grace of his almighty Spirit in all his people. When he has ſought them, and brought them back to God, and fed them with the bread of life, then in the ſtrength of this bread he enables them to fight againſt their

their enemies, who are alſo his, and it is for his glory that they get the victory over them. The weaker they are, the more does his ſtrength appear, which worketh mightily in them and by them. And to encourage them to fear nothing but ſin, he thus exhorts them—" Fear not little " flock, for it is your Father's good pleaſure to " give you the kingdom;" and as it is his good pleaſure to give you the kingdom itſelf, he will certainly ſupport you in the way to it. You may be poor and weak ſheep, but your ſhepherd is the Lord God omnipotent. You may have many infirmities, but he knows them, and is touched with the feeling of them. You may have many temptations, but he will not ſuffer you to be tempted above what he will enable you to bear. Your troubles may be great, but he ſays, " Fear " not, for I am with thee, I will be with thee in " trouble, yea, I will deliver thee, and bring thee " to honour." Who can doubt of his paſtoral love, that reads this ſweet deſcription of it in Iſaiah, " He ſhall feed his flock like a ſhepherd, " he ſhall gather the lambs with his arm, and " carry them in his boſom, and ſhall gently lead " thoſe that are with young." In what a tender and affecting manner is our Lord's paſtoral love here repreſented? He feeds all his flock, ſo that they lack nothing. If any of them wander from the fold, he gathers them with his arm. Thoſe that are with young he leads gently. And thoſe

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that cannot go at all, he carries in his boſom, and lays near his heart. Oh what a wonderful love is this! Certainly there never was greater love, except what our Lord ſhewed, when he laid down his life for the ſheep. In which inſtance of his love he is unrivalled. Other ſhepherds may have ſuch care for their flock, as to ſeek the loſt ſheep, to feed them all, to watch over them, and to defend them from their enemies, and nothing farther is expected of them. But our Lord ſhewed his greateſt love, where theirs ends. They feed and fatten the flock, that they may feed and cloath themſelves with it. They live upon the flock; but he laid down his life for the helpleſs loſt ſheep. He died to give them life: for the good ſhepherd giveth his life for the ſheep; which leads me to the fourth particular, I was to conſider, namely, That Chriſt ſaves his flock from the great trial of all, from death.

The faithful in the text certainly included this, when they prayed for a reſting place from trials and troubles. The raging heat at noon properly expreſſes the ſharpeſt trial with the laſt enemy. When ſin and ſatan try their utmoſt efforts, and ſet the King of terrors to attack and alarm the conſcience. And they ſucceed with all natural men. To unpardoned ſinners how fearful is death. The approach of it is to them the beginning of endleſs ſorrows. But our Lord's paſtoral love has engaged to deliver the ſheep of his

paſture

paſture from the power and from the fear of death. And here his divine affection for them ſhines forth in a wonderful manner, which can no more be deſcribed, than it can be imitated: for if all the holy angels in heaven, and all the creatures in the univerſe, were to lay down their lives to ſave one loſt ſheep, it would be in vain. The Lord Jeſus alone was equal to this great work: for he was God in man united in one Chriſt, and therefore his death was of ineſtimable and infinite value. By it he made a full, perfect, and ſufficient ſacrifice, oblation, and ſatisfaction for ſin. St. Paul tells the Corinthians, "I delivered unto you firſt of all that which I "alſo received, how that Chriſt died for our ſins "according to the ſcriptures." The ſcriptures of the Old Teſtament ſhewed in the ſacrifices of the law, that he was to die and to ſhed his blood for ſin. One prophet ſays, that Chriſt ſhould ſwallow up death in victory. (Iſaiah xxv. 8.) And in another Chriſt himſelf ſays, "I will ranſom "them from the power of the grave, I will re-"deem them from death: O death, I will be thy "plagues, O grave, I will be thy deſtruction." (Hoſea xiii. 14.) And the New Teſtament ſhews how he fulfilled theſe ſcriptures; by the one ſacrifice of himſelf he aboliſhed death, ſo that it has no longer any power over the children of God.

But do not the children of God die as well as other men? Yes. It is appointed unto all men

men once to die; but death has no power to hurt God's children, and they know, by faith, that it has not. Here is their comfort. Each of them can ſay with Paul, Jeſus Chriſt loved me and gave himſelf for me. By his death I live. I know him, and the power of his reſurrection: for I have experienced this power raiſing me up from the grave of ſin to newneſs of life, and therefore when I go through the ſhadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou my almighty ſhepherd ſhalt be there with me, and thy rod and thy ſtaff ſhall then comfort me.

And thus Chriſt has delivered the ſheep of his paſture from the power of death, and thanks be to God who gives us the victory over the fear of it through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. He came to deliver thoſe, who through fear of death had been all their life-time ſubject to bondage. And he does deliver them. We ſee many happy inſtances of his power to deliver. And if there be any of you, my brethren, whoſe hearts tell you that you are not delivered, conſider what is the reaſon. Why do you, who call yourſelves chriſtians, fear to die? What is there terrible in death to a true believer? And yet it is terrible to you; if it ſhould come this day, it would ſurpriſe you. Nay the very thought of it is painful. You put it aſide, and wiſh to forget it. All this proves that you have nothing more of chriſtianity than the name. You have experienced none of

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the life and power of it: for your ſins are not pardoned. You fear death, becauſe the ſenſe of guilt is not taken out of the conſcience. "For the ſting of death is ſin, and the ſtrength "of ſin is the law." While ſin ſtings the conſcience, and the broken law gives ſtrength to ſin, ſo that it ſtings the deeper, you muſt fear death. And this is the reaſon ſo many people called chriſtians, are afraid to die. They don't know that their ſins are pardoned, and that all the demands of the law upon them are ſatisfied, by their good ſhepherd's laying down his life for them. Nay, they are ſo far from knowing this, that they never deſired, and perhaps many of them think it preſumption and madneſs to pretend to know it. My brethren, if theſe be your thoughts, you may be aſſured, you can never meet death with joy, until faith give you a clear view of your intereſt in Chriſt: but when it enables you to ſee him, obeying, ſuffering, and dying for your ſins, and as your all-prevailing interceſſor pleading your cauſe before God, then the ſting of death will be taken away. You will have nothing to fear: for then you will know, that all things are yours, whether life or death, or things preſent, or things to come, all are yours, and ye are Chriſt's, and Chriſt is God's.

If we ſum up, and lay together what has been ſaid, it will appear that Chriſt is altogether lovely

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in the character of the ſhepherd and biſhop of our ſouls. What more could be done, than he has done for the ſheep of his paſture? He has brought them back to God from the error of their ways, has ſupported them when they were brought back, has defended them in their trials and troubles, and has given to them eternal life as the purchaſe of his death. Theſe with all the other benefits of the goſpel were obtained by the good ſhepherd's laying down his life for the ſheep, and are now freely beſtowed by his grace, and thankfully received by faith. At preſent it is the great privilege of all Chriſt's ſheep to know by faith that they belong to his fold, and that they have an intereſt in the bleſſings which he has to give. Theſe faith receives and enjoys: for we are in poſſeſſion of none of them, until they be applied, and it is faith that makes the application. When we receive faith from the operation of God, then we know that all the benefits which the good ſhepherd has to beſtow are ours: for the language of faith is this—"The Lord is my ſhepherd, therefore can "I lack nothing. He ſhall feed me in a green "paſture, and ſhall lead me forth beſide the "waters of comfort. Yea, though I walk through "the valley of the ſhadow of death, I will fear "no evil." When faith fears no evil, no not even death, then hope can reſt itſelf upon the care of the good ſhepherd, and the ſenſe of his

love

love will produce love and grateful obedience. Thus the graces of the Spirit, faith, hope, and love, are produced in the hearts of all that belong to Chriſt's flock, and are the ſheep of his paſture. They know their good ſhepherd, and are known of him. They know his voice and follow him, yea they follow him with joy, whether he calls them to do or to ſuffer for his name's ſake.

If any of you think this is not to be clearly known, your denial does not prove, that God has not promiſed to give this faith, nor that he does not give it, but only that he has not given it to you; for the ſcripture has expreſsly promiſed it, and it is a certain matter of fact, that God is daily fulfilling his promiſes. And when they are fulfilled to any perſon, he cannot but know it. He had been all his life a loſt ſheep, wandering from God without any deſire to return, does not he know, when he began to pray earneſtly, that God would heal his wanderings, and bring him home again? How can he poſſibly be ignorant of ſo great a change in his own mind? When his deſires take a new turn, he that ſought for happineſs in the world, now ſeeks it in Chriſt, and has turned his back upon all that worldly men call rich and honourable, deſiring only the riches of grace, and the honours of eternity, how can the man himſelf not know this, when every body about him ſees it? When God has given

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him theſe deſires, and he is reſolved by the help of divine grace to ſeek until he find by faith, that Chriſt is his Saviour and his God, when his conſtant diſcourſe is, "Nothing but Chriſt, no-"thing but Chriſt," does not the man know all this time what he is ſpeaking and doing? Its certain he does, becauſe his neighbours know it, and ridicule him for it, and when they cannot laugh him out of his religious notions, they leave him for an incorrigible enthuſiaſt. But if he does not leave ſeeking God, God will convince him by many undoubted proofs, that he is one of the ſheep of Chriſt's paſture. God will enable him to know, that he is a partaker of all the exceeding great and precious promiſes of the goſpel, by means of his union with Jeſus Chriſt through faith, and he will ſend the ſpirit of adoption into his heart, bearing teſtimony with his ſpirit, that he is a child of God. This teſtimony cannot poſſibly be a deluſion, becauſe it is followed by a change, which the Almighty alone is able to effect: for being united to Jeſus by faith, he is made partaker of a new nature, with a new heart, and renewed affections; he is a new creature, the old things of his former ſtate and converſation are done away, and behold all things are become new. His ſoul is filled with love to his God and Saviour, for doing theſe great things for him, and ſhew its love by love to his commandments. When all this is done, may

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not the man confidently ſay with the prophet, "The Lord is my ſhepherd, I am one of his "people, and one of the ſheep of his paſ-"ture?"

Since then believers may be as certain of Chriſt's being their ſhepherd, as they were in the text, and can truly ſay with them, "Tell me, O "thou whom my ſoul loveth, where thou feedeſt "thy flock, where thou makeſt them to reſt in "the raging heat of noon," I have now brought the diſcourſe to the point I aimed at, which was to prepare the way for this queſtion, and may God enable you to anſwer it to yourſelves honeſtly and fairly, "Is Chriſt your ſhepherd?" Let every one of you aſk his own heart, "Is my ſoul "under the paſtoral care of this good ſhepherd?" If you know by the marks before laid down, that he is yours, and you are the ſheep of his paſture, you will love him and ſerve him without fear in holineſs and righteouſneſs before him all the days of your life. But if you know it not, or are not ſeeking it, it is incumbent upon me to warn you of your guilt, and of your danger. You know not as yet that you have any right to uſe the words of the text. You cannot ſay to the great and good ſhepherd, from a ſenſe of what he has done for you, "O thou whom my ſoul "loveth." You know not that he feeds you with the bread of God, which endureth unto everlaſting life, nor that he is your defender in

danger, your refuge in time of trouble, your ready helper in an hour of temptation, and your almighty ſupporter under perſecution. Nay, perhaps you may think theſe things cannot be known. From hence it is certain, that you are not at preſent a part of Chriſt's flock, and therefore you have none of the bleſſings or privileges which belong to it, no pardon of ſin, no ſenſe of juſtification to life, you have none of the life which Chriſt came to give to ſinners, no grace, no holineſs, no happineſs. God the Father is your enemy, his law has condemned you, his juſtice is concerned to ſee the ſentence of the law executed upon you, and the judge himſelf has given you an awful deſcription of its execution in the xxvth of St. Matthew. Conſider theſe things, my brethren. Weigh the importance of them, and ſee whether you have not reaſon to look up to the great and good ſhepherd, and to intreat him to bring you back to God from the error of your ways. May the Spirit of the living God ſhew you the danger of your preſent ſtate, and ſtir up deſires in your hearts for deliverance. May he enable you to ſeek it as his free gift, and in the ways of his ordinances, until you experience the ſweet and comfortable doctrine in the text, and can join in gratitude and praiſe with the Lord's people, and the ſheep of his paſture, to whom I ſhall in the laſt place make a ſhort application.

My chriſtian brethren, you have experienced the love of the divine ſhepherd, and therefore you love him, and can with full truſt and confidence addreſs him in the words of the text, "O "thou, whom my ſoul loveth." In the ſenſe of this love you are happy. Knowing that the incarnate God ſtands related to you as your all-loving ſhepherd, you can caſt all your care upon him: for he careth for you. He has engaged, and your faith can reſt itſelf upon his promiſes, that you ſhall lack nothing. All things are yours: for they are in the hand of your kind ſhepherd and loving Saviour, who will make them all work together for your good. He knows what is beſt for you, and he will give it you. And you know it to be beſt; be it ſickneſs or health, poverty or riches, they are alike ſanctified viſitations. You taſte of God's love in them, and you love him for them. Nothing can hurt you but ſin, and you need fear nothing but it: for all things but ſin ſhall do you good. Outward trials and troubles ſhall be real bleſſings. They will drive you nearer to Chriſt, and keep you in cloſer communion with him, and thereby you will not only be a conqueror over them, but will alſo make great advances in the divine life. "What ſhall ſeparate us from the love of Chriſt, "ſays the apoſtle, ſhall tribulation, or diſtreſs, "or perſecution, or famine, or nakedneſs, or "peril, or ſword? Nay, in all theſe things we

"are

"are more than conquerors through him that "loved us."

Now is not this a ſtate greatly to be deſired? If ſomething did not blind men's eyes and pervert their judgment, would not they all out of ſelf-love ſeek the happy knowledge of their being the ſheep of the Lord's paſture, who lack nothing, and who have all manner of things that are good? The great ſhepherd and biſhop of ſouls watches over them by his almighty power, ſuffering nothing to hurt them in their real intereſt, but ordering all things for their benefit. His very judgments upon the wicked are mercies to them. And ſince he can thus make outward calamities work for their good, what muſt his acts of grace and love be? Who can tell, how bleſſed the man is whoſe iniquities are forgiven, and whoſe ſins are covered? Who has joy and peace in believing that he is pardoned and juſtified, who has the ſpirit of adoption in his heart, enabling him to cry, Abba, Father, and abiding with him to ſtrengthen, to comfort, and to ſanctify him, ſhedding daily more and more of the love of God abroad in his heart, and making him fit and meet for glory. Muſt not ſuch a man be bleſſed indeed! Can you conceive a more happy ſtate on this ſide of heaven? And do you not then deſire it? If you do, O come, taſte, and ſee what happineſs this great and good ſhepherd does beſtow, pray to him for the ex-

perience of his love and power, and let us join in calling upon him, and ſaying,

O Lord Jeſu Chriſt, the great ſhepherd of the ſheep, who haſt redeemed them by the blood of the everlaſting covenant, look down upon this congregation, and be gracious to thoſe who have no deſire to know thee to be the ſhepherd and biſhop of their ſouls. Shew them their guilt, convince them of their danger, and enable them with thoſe who are now ſeeking, to wait upon thee, until thou bring them into thy fold; and there feed them with the bread of God, and ſupport them in all troubles and trials, until death be ſwallowed up in victory. Oh bleſſed and adorable Jeſus, give this whole congregation the ſweet experience of the doctrine we have been conſidering, and although we have all been as ſheep going aſtray, yet grant we may all return to the ſhepherd and biſhop of our ſouls, and be happy with him in time and in eternity. So be it, to the honour and glory of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three perſons in one Jehovah, to whom be equal praiſe and worſhip, now and for ever. *Amen* and *Amen.*

SERMON V.

CHAP. i. VER. 8.

If thou know not, O thou faireſt among women, go thy way forth by the footſteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beſide the ſhepherds tents.

THESE words are an anſwer to the prayer, which the believers had offered up in the preceding verſe. They had taſted of the love of the great and good ſhepherd, and knew they belonged to his flock, and therefore they intreated him to feed them with the bread of God—Give us this day our daily bread, and to lead them in time of trouble and temptation to a place of refuge and ſafety. Each of them could thus pray for himſelf, "Tell me, O thou whom my ſoul "loveth, where thou feedeſt, where thou makeſt "thy flock to reſt at noon: for why ſhould I be "as one that turneth aſide by the flocks of thy "companions?" Why ſhould I be miſled by them? If he followed the flocks of theſe companions he would be turned aſide, and conſequently they were not true ſincere companions of Chriſt, but only in name and pretence.

In the words which I have now read we have the ſucceſs of this prayer. They contain a gracious anſwer from our Lord Jeſus, the great ſhepherd

ſhepherd and biſhop of ſouls. The prayer conſiſted of two parts, and he makes a reply to each. "If thou know not, ſays he, O thou faireſt "among women, go thy way forth by the foot-"ſteps of the flock," there you will find food, "and feed thy kids beſide the ſhepherds tents," there you will find ſafety. May his good Spirit enlighten all our underſtandings clearly to ſee the ſenſe of theſe words, and may he enable us to experience the power of them, and if it be his good pleaſure by means of what ſhall be ſpoken.

Firſt, In a ſhort paraphraſe upon them, and

Secondly, In the practical uſe and application I ſhall make of them.

Our bleſſed Saviour is the great and good ſhepherd of ſouls. His greatneſs makes his goodneſs more deſirable: for he is almighty to give whatever he ſees his people want. Whatever they aſk of him, he is able and willing to grant it: for he is a God hearing prayer. His ears are always open to receive, his love is always diſpoſed to anſwer the prayer of faith. So ſoon as the faithful in the text had ſent up their petitions to the great ſhepherd and biſhop of ſouls, the anſwer came down. Yea he himſelf brought it. He that ſpake and all things were made, he that commanded, and they ſtill obey his commandment and hearken unto the voice of his words, he the God and king of heaven and earth

ſays,

ſays, " If thou know not, if thou doſt not clearly " and fully know, but comeſt to me for direc- " tion and aſſiſtance, O thou faireſt among wo- " men." The ſoul is here ſpoken of, as the church often is under the ſimilitude of a woman, and ſaid to be fair, fair even in the eyes of Chriſt, the bridegroom of the church. And by what means was ſhe made thus lovely in his ſight? In herſelf ſhe was black and ſinful, and there is nothing ſo filthy and abominable in the ſight of the all-pure God, as ſin. He cannot behold the leaſt iniquity, and mankind is conceived and born in iniquity, and by nature ſubject to the wrath of God, how then can he behold it with approbation? Not until it be cleanſed from all ſin in the blood of the Lamb. When it is juſtified by his righteouſneſs, and cloathed with his graces, then it will be indeed fair and beautiful; yea perfect through my comelineſs, which I had put upon thee, ſaith the Lord God. When Chriſt has thus preſented the ſoul to himſelf not having ſpot or wrinkle, or any ſuch thing, but holy and without blemiſh, then he ſpeaks to her as perfect in beauty, " If thou know not, O thou faireſt " among women, go thy way forth by the foot- " ſteps of the flock." The great ſhepherd has but one flock. Although it conſiſts of a great multitude, which no man could number, yet they have but one ſpirit in them all, but one Lord, one faith, and one baptiſm. They are of

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one heart, and of one mind; they walk by the ſame rule, and mind the ſame thing. Though part of them be already entered into reſt, and others are ſtill in the world, yet they have ſweet fellowſhip and communion with each other in the unity of the ſpirit. And e'er long they will be all gathered into one place. There will be but one fold, and one ſhepherd: for in the diſpenſation of the fulneſs of times God will gather together in one all things in Chriſt, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him.

And as the flock is one, ſo is the way. There never was but one way, in which the Lord's flock walked. In the ſame good old way, they that are gone before, and we that are following after them muſt walk. Many diſputes indeed have been raiſed about it by men who are gone out of the way. The philoſophers of Greece and Rome ſought by the light of nature, but could not find it, and our modern reaſoners are ſeeking it by the ſame light, and ſtill miſs it; but believers are at no loſs, becauſe their Lord ended all diſputes about it, when he declared, "I am the way." He is the only way, becauſe no ſinner can come to the Father but by him. You muſt walk with him in his way, if ever you be reconciled to the Father, and ſee his face with joy. And what is it that brings us into his way? Faith, the one faith which unites the

believer to Chriſt, and which is juſtifying faith, becauſe there is no ſaving faith but this. You may divide faith into many branches according to its ſeveral offices, and may give it ſeveral names, but if it be ſaving faith it is that which juſtifies, which by uniting us to Chriſt ſets us in the right way, and keeps us in it. And this faith all believers had under the Old Teſtament diſpenſation, as certainly as we have it under the New. They proved that they had the one faith, by the actings of their faith, as St. Paul has taught us at large in the 11th chapter to the Hebrews; wherein he ſets before us the moſt celebrated perſonages in ſcripture, and ſhews what great things their faith enabled them to do and to ſuffer, in order to encourage us to follow the ſteps of their faith.

Some perhaps may enquire, whether the faith that juſtified and ſaved them was the ſame that we have now: the apoſtle replies that there is but one faith, and if theirs was not the one faith, how could he propoſe their faith to us, and exhort us to follow them, looking, as they did, unto Jeſus the author and finiſher of faith? Our reformers have conſidered the 11th chapter to the Hebrews in the ſecond part of their homily upon faith, and they ſum it up in theſe words: "This is the chriſtian faith which theſe holy "men had, and we alſo ought to have. And "although they were not named chriſtian men, "yet

" yet was it a chriſtian faith that they had, for " they looked for all benefits of God the Father, " through the merits of his Son Jeſus Chriſt, as " we now do. This difference is between them " and us, that they looked when Chriſt ſhould " come; and we be in the time, when he is " come: therefore ſaith St. Auguſtine, the time " is altered and changed, but not the faith." In effect they and we be all one; we have the ſame faith that they had, and they the ſame that we have, and therefore in the text we are directed to follow their faith, and more eſpecially the actings of their faith, " Go thy way forth by " the footſteps of the flock." You may ſee in what way they walked by the marks and prints of their feet, which they have left behind them. Obſerve thoſe, and tread in their ſteps. See what great things, how impoſſible to fleſh and blood, their faith enabled them to perform, and go and do thou likewiſe. St. Paul has determined, that this is the meaning of treading in their ſteps, in Rom. iv. 12. where he is ſpeaking of Abraham's being the father of all thoſe who tread in the ſteps of that faith, which he had, being yet uncircumciſed—he is the father of all thoſe who can tread in the ſteps of his faith, who follow him in the actings of his faith, and can give ſuch marks of its ſincerity as he did.

Try yourſelves then, my brethren, in this point, and examine whether you are following

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the footſteps of the flock. Can you tread in the ſteps of Abraham's faith? When God called Abraham to leave his country and his father's houſe, he obeyed, and he went out not knowing whither he went: God does call you to leave the world, and the things of it, and to ſet your affections upon the things above; and can you, have you obeyed? Do you live in the world, like Abraham, a ſtranger and a pilgrim, knowing that here is not your home, but that you have a better country, namely a heavenly, provided for you? Can you live upon the promiſes of God, as Abraham did, when all things make againſt you, and rely with full truſt and confidence upon the divine faithfulneſs and truth? Can you give up the deareſt object of your heart, be it an only child, if the God of all grace and love ſhould think proper to take it from you? Are you thus ſtrong in faith, giving glory to God? Can you copy after theſe actings of Abraham's faith? If you cannot follow his ſteps, conſider what is the reaſon. Do you deſire it? If you do, have you not the promiſe of the ſame grace which Abraham had, to enable you to walk by faith and not by ſight? Are not all things poſſible to him that believeth? Why then are you behind Abraham? Oh haſten your ſteps, and get to the head of the flock. Let none be before you. You have the very ſame help that the father of the faithful had,

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therefore caſt aſide every weight, and the ſin which does ſo eaſily beſet you, (it is ſin that ſtops your courſe) and preſs toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus.

But perhaps ſome perſon may aſk, where ſhall I meet with the footſteps of the flock of Chriſt? Where are there any marks of them to be found? That you might not be at a loſs, God has been pleaſed to leave a lively and exact print of them in the ſcripture. There you have an impreſſion of all the footſteps, which you are to follow: for the word is a lanthorn unto our feet, and a light unto our paths, to guide our feet into the way of peace, and then to order our ſteps in it. St. Paul, 1 Cor. x. having drawn the great outlines of the Jewiſh hiſtory, ſays, "That all theſe things happened unto them "for examples, and they are written for our "admonition." And having, Heb. xi. deſcribed the actings of the faith of the Old Teſtament ſaints, he applies them to us for our example, exhorting us to follow their faith; and he alſo propoſes himſelf for a pattern to the Corinthians, "Be ye followers of me, even as I alſo am of "Chriſt"—follow my ſteps ſo far as I follow Chriſt's. In this light we are to conſider the footſteps of the flock. Chriſt is at the head, and goes before his flock, they follow him and tread in his ſteps, and we who come after

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tread in theirs, following them in the way, wherein they followed Chriſt. And all this is recorded for our uſe in ſcripture. We are to take no ſtep, unleſs we ſee ſome marks of the flock's having gone before, and taken that very ſtep; and when we are united by faith to Chriſt, and under the guidance of his good Spirit, we ſhall then ſee directions left in ſcripture, for every ſtep we are to take. And thus though it be not in man that walketh to direct his ſteps, yet the Lord will hold up our goings in his paths that our footſteps ſlip not: for the ſteps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he maketh his way acceptable to himſelf.

This is, I think, the ſenſe of the firſt part of my text, namely, of treading in the footſteps of the flock: the next words have very little difficulty, "and feed thy kids beſide the ſhepherd's "tents." Theſe ſhepherds are the ſervants of the chief ſhepherd, whoſe own the ſheep are. The miniſters of the Lord who have the care and charge of his flock are throughout the ſcriptures called paſtors or ſhepherds. And their tents here mentioned are not ſuch tents as earthly ſhepherds pitch, when they are watching their flocks, but certain ſtated fixed dwellings, wherein they officiated as ſpiritual paſtors and ſhepherds. The original word is not what our tranſlators commonly render tents, but another, which always ſignifies to dwell or to inhabit, and which

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is of the ſame root with Shecinah, the habitation of the divine glory in the tabernacle and temple. The firſt time it occurs is in the third of Geneſis, where the uſe and deſign of the cherubim is mentioned—" And God drove out the man, and he " placed," he dwelt in, or inhabited the cherubim." We read of God's appearing in the moſt holy place of the tabernacle and temple over the cherubim; for which reaſon St. Paul calls them the cherubim of glory. And the whole tabernacle and temple, including the holy as well as the moſt holy place, with all their ſacred veſſels and apparatus, are generally called by the ſame word that is in my text, viz. " the " dwelling." Indeed it is commonly tranſlated tabernacle, but it ſignifies the dwelling-place of the God of Iſrael, the place where he had put his name to dwell there. And accordingly when the tabernacle and temple were reared up, the glory of the Lord, that glorious and divine perſon who was the reality of all their types and ceremonies, came and filled them. And it was upon account of his preſence in them, that the faithful could ſay, " Lord, I have loved the ha- " bitation of thine houſe, and the place where " thy glory dwelleth." Theſe circumſtances may lead us to conſider the dwellings, mentioned in my text, as places appropriated to a religious uſe, dwellings ſacred rather than civil, ſuch as the ſhepherds dwelt in, when they were

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acting in their office as paſtors over the flock of Chriſt. In theſe dwellings they reſided in order to diſpenſe the word and the ſacraments, and to adminiſter the ordinances to the Lord's people, and to the ſheep of his paſture: for here they were to feed the kids; the original word is uſed for the young of the ſheep as well as of the goats; for whom the chief ſhepherd had a particular love and tenderneſs. He carries them in his boſom. And they lay near the heart of all the Lord's faithful paſtors, who watch with the greateſt care over the young and weak part of their flock, uſing every likely means to preſerve and ſtrengthen them, and withal ſtriving much for them with God in prayer. No tender parent can be more concerned for the health of a weak and ſickly child, than they are for the weak in the faith. Knowing to what temptations they are expoſed, and what difficulties they have to encounter, they labour earneſtly to keep them near the ſhepherds dwellings, in cloſe attendance upon the ordinances, for here they will be ſafe from danger, and will find food to ſtrengthen their hearts, and to enable them to grow in grace.

I hope it now appears from what has been ſaid, that the Lord's anſwer is direct and full to his people's prayer. They had deſired to learn where he fed his flock, and where he made them reſt in times of great trials and troubles. He replies,

replies, with lips full of grace, If thou art at a loſs, O my beloved, whom I have purchaſed with mine own blood, and made fair and lovely with mine own righteouſneſs, go thy way forth by the footſteps of the flock, ſee in what way they have always walked, mark the actings of their faith, imitate them, and you will find the more you act faith the ſtronger it will grow. If temptations are powerful, and troubles many and heavy, and the heat of perſecution rages, and faith is ready to ſhrink back, and to give way, then keep near the ſhepherds dwellings. There are the ordinances, upon which in time of danger young and weak believers ſhould attend cloſely. The more they wait upon the Lord with the paſtors of his flock, the more food they will get for their ſouls, and the greater ſafety and ſtrength will they find: for where can the believer hope to grow ſtronger in grace than under the means of grace? Theſe are the inſtituted means of making believers ſtrong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, able to withſtand in the evil day, and having done all to ſtand, reſiſting unto blood, ſtriving againſt ſin.

This is the doctrine of the text, in which there are two rules laid down for the conduct of believers. At all times they are to tread in the footſteps of the flock, and to follow the actings of their faith, and in troubleſome times they are to keep near the ſhhepherds dwellings, that they

they may receive comfort and ſtrength from the uſe of the ordinances. Theſe are Chriſt's own directions to them that are in the faith, as to thoſe perſons, who have never ſeen their want of faith and are not ſeeking it, they are not concerned in what has been ſaid. They have no lot nor ſhare with us in this matter: for how ſhould they follow the footſteps of the flock, who are not yet got into the way in which the flock walks? All men by nature have turned aſide from the right way, they have erred and ſtrayed from the ways of God like loſt ſheep, and have neither will nor power to turn into it. While they are in this ſtate, they don't belong to Chriſt's flock, and therefore how ſhould they follow the actings of their faith, who themſelves have no faith? My brethren, are any of you in this ſtate? Do you know nothing of your having received faith from God as his gift, and wrought in your heart by the operation of his Spirit? Then you ſhould fear and tremble for your guilt and your danger. Conſider your guilt. You have all your ſins, original and actual to anſwer for, and before a God who is of purer eyes than to behold the leaſt iniquity. Conſider your danger. Have you not read, "He that believeth "not ſhall be damned," and are you not afraid of damnation? For while your ſins are unpardoned every ſtep you take tends to hell beneath. And what is there between you and it? Think

how near you are to it. There is nothing but this thin partition of fleſh, and this little vapour of life, this light air that you breathe, nothing elſe keeps you out of everlaſting burnings. And if God was to take away your breath this moment, Oh where would your poor ſoul be? Meditate on an eternity of torments, and while there is a moment left, uſe it, and flee from the wrath to come. Flee to Jeſus, the great and good ſhepherd, and try, whether he will not ſave thee, for there is ſalvation in none other. If thou art ſenſible of thy guilt and of thy danger, fear not. Apply to him, and he will get himſelf glory in bringing thee home to God, and in making thee one of the ſheep of his paſture.

Although the directions in the text relate only to the faithful, yet I could not help ſpeaking a word to thoſe who neither have, nor are ſeeking, the true ſaving faith. I pray God to make it uſeful to their ſouls, and I now come to apply the firſt rule here laid down. It is an anſwer to the prayer of the faithful. They had intreated Chriſt to inform them, where he fed his flock; his anſwer is, Go thy way forth by the footſteps of the flock, ſee in what way they were led and ſupported, and what prints and marks they left behind them, theſe follow, and you will be carried ſafe through, as they were. Chriſt himſelf is the way, faith ſets believers in it by uniting them to Chriſt, the footſteps are the actings of faith

faith recorded in ſcripture, the great things which by faith the ſaints of old were enabled to perform, and theſe things the ſcripture holds out to us for our example, and admonition. Now my brethren, when you read of the power of faith in former times, do you find it as powerful in you? Faith is the ſame: for there is but one faith, and one Lord who gives it, he changeth not, he is the ſame yeſterday, to-day, and for ever. His promiſes are like himſelf, truth itſelf, and unchangeable. Why then is not faith as mighty in operation as it ever was? Why does it not perform the ſame wonders now, which it did formerly? In the 11th of the Hebrews, we read of many ſignal victories, which the old ſaints obtained by the power of faith, and our church ſays (ſecond part of the homily upon faith) "St. Paul ſo "much extolleth their faith, becauſe we ſhould "not leſs, but rather more, give ourſelves wholly "unto Chriſt, both in profeſſion and living, now "when Chriſt is come, than the old fathers did "before his coming. And by all the declarations "of St. Paul it is evident, that the true, lively, "and Chriſtian faith is no dead, vain, or unfruitful thing, but a thing of perfect virtue, of "wonderful operation or working, and ſtrength, "bringing forth all good motions and good "works." When you read of the actings of faith in former times, try yourſelves, my beloved brethren, and ſee whether it has the ſame won-

derful operation and working in you. Try whether you can follow the footſteps of the flock. The victories of their faith are marked out for your example, can you then with them triumph over all the enemies of faith, over ſin and ſatan, the world and the fleſh, death and the grave? Theſe are the enemies with whom you are to fight the good fight of faith; and theſe the faithful have defeated. Their faith conquered ſin by apprehending and applying Chriſt's righteouſneſs for pardon and juſtification, and by drawing from his fulneſs grace for grace to ſubdue the dominion of ſin. And are you growing in grace, and ſo ſtrong in faith, that when ſin puts on its moſt alluring dreſs, you can with Joſeph and Moſes, nobly reject its flattering pleaſures? When the devil throws his fiery darts at you, have you the ſhield of faith ready to hold up in your defence, againſt which the rage and force of his darts is quenched and ſpent, ſo that you can ſay with Paul, I have fought the good fight, I have finiſhed my courſe, I have kept the faith? When the world invites you with its riches and honours, can you with Abraham and his deſcendants live a wanderer and a ſojourner upon earth, knowing that God is your God, and that he hath provided for you a city not made with hands eternal in the heavens? This is living by faith, and not by ſight, and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Do

you know that the will of the fleſh is enmity to the will of God, and therefore can your faith ſubmit to ſuffer the will of God, and with Job to bear it patiently? In ſhort, can you with Paul rejoice alike in poverty and riches, in pleaſure and pain, in honour and diſgrace, yea, can you with him do all things through Chriſt that ſtrengtheneth you? That is a great word—all things—I can do all things. And yet faith can ſpeak it without preſumption: for all things are poſſible to him that believeth. It is poſſible with David to fear no evil, no, not when you are going through the valley and ſhadow of death; yea, faith can with the bleſſed Paul give thanks to God for giving it the victory over death through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.

Theſe are ſome of the victories of faith, which it has already attained, and which are recorded in ſcripture for your imitation. And if you find any of them too hard for you, it is not becauſe faith has loſt any of its virtue and efficacy, but becauſe you don't put faith upon acting. Faith is ſtill almighty. Set it to work, and try its power, and you will find it can do whatever it has done, and why ſhould you doubt of its doing what God has promiſed it ſhall do? Surely the Lord's hand is not ſhortened. He can ſtill make faith as victorious as it ever was: for he left theſe great exploits of faith upon record for your uſe. Theſe footſteps of the flock were left on purpoſe

poſe for your encouragement, that you might ſee how poſſible it was to conquer ſin and ſatan, the world and the fleſh, death and the grave. Theſe are your Lord's enemies as well as yours. It is for his honour that you ſhould conquer them. And he promiſes you his help, the ſame help which he gave to theſe faithful ſoldiers, who having fought the good fight of faith now ſtand confirmed in bliſs, with crowns of eternal glory upon their heads, and palms of victory in their hands. Is it not a privilege to be enabled to tread in their ſteps? Can there be a greater privilege? Can there be greater happineſs, than to conquer and to be crowned with them? Oh diſparage not then your Lord nor his gifts, by doubting of the power of faith? Fear not, only believe. Bring your belief into act. Oppoſe it to your enemies, and ſee whether it will not make you more than conquerors over them. Whatever God has promiſed faith ſhould do in you, and for you, is he not almighty to perform? Doubt not then whenever you are following the footſteps of the flock, but his omnipotence will be preſent with you to fulfil his promiſes, and you will find that all things are poſſible to him that believeth.

Theſe victories indeed may be attained by them that are ſtrong in faith—but perhaps ſome of you may fancy, I am weak in the faith—I muſt not aſpire to ſuch great things. Why not?

Faith

Faith is the gift of God. And it is mighty by his operation. Faith does not work in the ſtrength of nature, but in the omnipotence of grace. And grace is free---as free for you who are a weak believer, as for the ſtrongeſt. So that you may aſpire to great things. Put your faith upon acting, and ſee whether it will not make you equal to the greateſt things: For

Allowing you are weak at preſent, yet it is not God's intention, that you ſhould continue ſo. He has appointed the means of grace for your growth in grace. Attend upon the ordinances, keep near the ſhepherds dwellings, and there you will find yourſelves ſtrengthened and eſtabliſhed: for there is food for your ſoul. God has promiſed that his quickening Spirit ſhall be in the ordinances, and that he will render them effectual for the ends for which they were inſtituted. It is his grace that animates and enlivens them: for without it they are but dead letters, mere carnal ordinances, which profit nothing to the edifying of the ſoul, but when he quickens them with his divine preſence, then they build up and ſtrengthen the believer, and are the means of his growing in grace.

If then any of you are ſenſible of your having but weak faith, wait upon God for the ſtrengthening of it. And wait in the ways of his ordinances. In them he has promiſed to be found of thoſe that ſeek him. You will find his Spirit preſent

preſent in the word, in prayer, and in the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper. Keep near to them, and God will give you food for your ſouls, enabling you in the ſtrength of it to get more power over ſin, and to be more alive unto God.

The word is expreſsly ſaid to be the means of ſpiritual life, Pſalm cxix. 50. Thy word hath quickened me: and it is alſo the means of the growth of this ſpiritual life, according to the apoſtle, "As new born babes deſire the ſincere "milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." But then in order that we may thus grow by the word, faith muſt be mixed with it—St. Paul tells the Theſſalonians, 1 Epiſtle, Chap. ii. 13. "When "ye received the word of God which ye heard "of us, ye received it not as the word of men, "but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which "effectually worketh alſo in you that believe." Faith makes it work effectually, and unleſs faith be mixed and incorporated, as it were, with it, it does not profit: for we are aſſured that the antient Jews had the ſame goſpel preached unto them that we have, but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

If you cannot mix faith with the word preached, ſo as to find yourſelf growing in grace and ſtrength, can you pray? Prayer is the appointed means of receiving a ſupply of all your wants, from the fulneſs of Chriſt Jeſus. Aſk and ye

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ſhall have, all that he has purchaſed, and all that he has to give: for his promiſe is very extenſive, Matt. xxi. 22. "All things," without any exception, "whatſoever ye ſhall aſk in prayer believing," if faith has any ground in the word of promiſe to believe, that it ſhall receive what it aſks, "ye ſhall receive it." Encouraged by this promiſe, aſk humbly whatever God had promiſed to give. Do you find yourſelf unable to follow the footſteps of the flock? Cannot you keep near the ſhepherds tents? But are you drawn away from attending upon the ordinances by the manifold temptations of ſin and ſatan, of the world and the fleſh? Pray for power to fight againſt theſe enemies, and Chriſt will make you more than conqueror. The more you pray, the ſtronger you will grow. Out of weakneſs you ſhall be made ſtrong. And by waiting conſtantly upon the Lord you ſhall renew your ſtrength, ſtrength to mortify ſin, and ſtrength to be alive unto God: yea, by waiting upon God you will receive the fulneſs of joy; for thus has the God that heareth prayer encouraged you to pray always and not to faint---"Aſk and you ſhall receive, that your "joy may be full." And

Where ſhould we wait upon God for the renewing of our ſtrength and for the fulneſs of joy, but at his own table? Has not the Lord appointed that his body ſhould be meat indeed, and that his blood ſhould be drink indeed, being the

the true ſpiritual food and ſtrengthening of our ſouls. Our reformers certainly looked upon the Lord's ſupper in this light; for to the queſtion in the Catechiſm, "What are the benefits whereof "we are partakers thereby?" they have given this anſwer, "The ſtrengthening and refreſhing "of our ſouls by the body and blood of Chriſt, "as our bodies are by the bread and wine." The elements are the inſtituted ſigns of that life, which Chriſt purchaſed by the offering of his body, and by the ſhedding of his blood. They are ſigns to all who underſtand their meaning, but ſeals to thoſe perſons only who are united to Chriſt by faith, and grafted as branches into the true vine. Wait upon him then, my brethren, in the appointed means for the continuance and growth of this divine life. Be found obedient to his command---Eat this bread and drink of this cup---Do this in remembrance of me, and you will receive ſomething more at the Lord's table, than mere ſigns. In the bread you will by faith partake of the body, and in the cup you will partake of the blood of Chriſt, adminiſtering to your ſoul that divine life, which he begins here in grace, and carries on for ever and ever in glory.

Theſe are the inſtituted means in which the weak in faith ought to wait upon the Lord, and he has encouraged them to wait upon him in theſe means with a promiſe, that he will therein be found of them that ſeek him, and will

ſtrengthen

ſtrengthen and eſtabliſh their hearts in the faith. We are his witneſſes, that he is faithful and juſt to fulfil his promiſes. We atteſt this upon our own experience. We found ourſelves growing in grace by attendance upon the ordinances. We expected to receive freely what God had freely promiſed, and we are not diſappointed of our hope. And this will be your happy experience, my brethren, who are now endeavouring to follow the footſteps of the flock. Keep near the ſhepherds tents. Attend cloſe upon the ordinances, and you will grow ſtrong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. And when you are ſtrong, beware of ſpiritual pride. Beware of being drawn away from the ordinances, as if they were not as neceſſary for you now, as they were formerly. Remember that you ſtand in the Lord's ſtrength, and he expects you ſhould wait upon him for the continuance of it. And if you leave off attending upon the ordinances, becauſe you think you are ſtrong in faith, it is juſt as if a ſtrong man ſhould fancy he had no occaſion to eat any more, becauſe of his great ſtrength. Our ſouls want continual ſupplies of grace, as our bodies ſtand in need of daily bread. And God has promiſed to make the ordinances food for his children, and he daily fulfils his promiſes to them. They find the quickening Spirit in the ordinances, communicating to them life, and comfort, and ſtrength, according to their ſeveral wants and neceſſities.

And

And as if theſe were not ſufficient motives to encourage you to wait upon God in the ways of his ordinances, he has promiſed to do more for thoſe who wait therein, than they can either aſk or think: "For ſince the beginning of the "world men have not heard, nor perceived by "the ear, neither hath the eye ſeen, O God, be "ſides thee, what he hath prepared for him that "waiteth for him. Thou meeteſt him that re- "joiceth, and worketh righteouſneſs, thoſe that "remember thee in thy ways." (Iſaiah lxiv. 4, 5.) Let us then remember God in his ways, and in theſe ways he will meet us with a bleſſing. Whatever he has promiſed, he will certainly fulfil. Wait upon him and you ſhall not be aſhamed. Follow the flock, and you ſhall be ſafe. Follow them, as they followed Chriſt, and you will be kept as they were. And let us look up to him for his gracious help to enable us to follow the ſteps of their faith, humbly praying to him in the words of our church, and ſaying---

"O Almighty God, who haſt knit together "thine elect in one communion and fellowſhip, "in the myſtical body of thy Son Chriſt our Lord; "grant us grace ſo to follow thy bleſſed ſaints in "all virtuous and godly living, that we may "come to thoſe unſpeakable joys, which thou "haſt prepared for them that unfeignedly love "thee, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen." Collect for All Saint's Day.

SERMON VI.

CHAP. IV. VER. 16.

Awake, O north wind, and come thou ſouth, blow upon my garden, that the ſpices thereof may flow out.

IN the foregoing chapter the believing ſoul had been in a dull heavy frame, but being concerned and uneaſy about it, had deſired the quickening influences of Chriſt's grace. Chriſt here anſwers theſe deſires. He calls for the wind to come and blow upon his garden. The wind is the ſcripture emblem and repreſentative of the Holy Spirit. When he deſcended upon the diſciples on the day of Pentecoſt, he came in this his known emblem, in a ruſhing mighty wind, and it follows, " they were all filled with the Holy " Ghoſt," filled with his gifts and graces. For the ſame good purpoſe his influence is here required. He is to blow upon the garden with his ſeveral operations, to quicken thoſe things, that were ready to die, and to bring forth the ſweet perfumes of the graces of his own planting. " Awake, O north wind, and come thou ſouth— " blow upon my garden, that the ſpices thereof " may flow out." May the enlivening Spirit bring the ſweet experience of theſe words to all your hearts.

hearts. As he is the omnipreſent God, he is here with us; Oh that he may be preſent in theſe his gracious offices. Like the ſharp penetrating north wind may he awaken conviction, and then come like the mild and ſoft ſouth wind with his comforts, that he may plant his graces in us, and cauſe the ſpices of them to flow out. God grant theſe may be the happy effects of our conſidering

Firſt, The ſenſe and meaning of the words.

Secondly, Of our defending the doctrine contained in them. And

Thirdly, Of our applying them to our ſpiritual uſe and benefit.

And Firſt, Let us conſider the ſenſe of the words. Chriſt is the ſpeaker. He had been comparing the church to a garden, which he had encloſed from the wilderneſs of the world. He had taken it in for his own uſe, and had ſet in it trees of righteouſneſs, which he had moved out of the common waſte, where they grew wild by nature, and had tranſplanted them into his garden. The faithful are the trees, which the heavenly huſbandman ſets in his own paradiſe. And by his cultivation, by being watered with his grace, and by clear ſhining after rain, from being wild and barren by nature they are changed, and they become trees of righteouſneſs, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified: "for herein," ſays the bleſſed Jeſus, "is my

"Father

"Father glorified, that ye bring forth much "fruit." The Lord has no barren trees in his paradiſe. Before he tranſplanted them they were a ſeminary of all evil weeds, they brought forth nothing that was good; but when once ſet in his garden they had a new ſpirit put into them, from whence come the ſeeds of all graces. For thus Chriſt in this chapter deſcribes his garden. Its plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleaſant fruits, camphire with ſpikenard—ſpikenard and ſaffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincenſe, myrrh and aloes, with all the chief ſpices. Upon this garden thus enriched like the paradiſe of God he calls the wind to blow, that it might bring forth the fragrancy of all its chief ſpices. The wind is the agent, that was to make them flow out. And wind is air in motion—air in action. This was the firſt mover in the formation of the world, and it is ſtill the principal mover in the formation and growth of every tree and plant. Natural hiſtorians have lately demonſtrated by undoubted experiments, that none of them can live without air. They want it as much as animals do. By it the odoriferous kind diffuſe their fragrancy. The air is the cauſe that firſt draws out, and then ſpreads abroad their ſweet perfumes. And by it the fruit-bearing kind will ſoon be adorned with beautiful bloſſoms, and in their ſeaſon with rich and ripe fruit. Their vegetable life

life with all the operations of it depends upon the air, in like manner as our ſpiritual life with all the operations of it depends upon the Holy Spirit, of whom the air was the inſtituted type. In our preſent embodied ſtate we cannot ſee ſpiritual, but through the glaſs of material objects. We are confined to ſenſe. And therefore God has been pleaſed to make uſe of ſenſible things in nature to repreſent the ſpiritual things in grace. He has drawn a juſt and perfect parallel. In the works of creation he has given us an expreſſive image of every ſpiritual object, with which he ſaw it needful for us to be acquainted. Of himſelf, of his eſſence, of his perſonality, and of the offices of the divine perſons in the œconomy of the covenant, he has ſet before our eyes in the agency of nature a lively picture: for the grand agent in nature is the air, which is one in eſſence, whether it be rarified to its ſmalleſt parts in the action of fire at the orb of the ſun, or ſent out in light, or returned in groſs air to maintain and carry on this action of fire at the orb of the ſun, in which ſoever of theſe three diſtinct operations it be employed it is ſtill air: and accordingly this unity of its eſſence, and diſtinction of its threefold agency, is declared in ſcripture to be the inſtituted type, in which we are to read the unity of the divine eſſence and the offices of the three divine perſons. The Pſalmiſt referring to the created image ſays, "The hea-

"vens

" vens declare the glory of God."—The heavens are not empty ſpace, for that could declare nothing, but they are the air in its three diſtinct offices, each of which is a record of God's glory. For as the apoſtle explains the point, " The " inviſible things of God are clearly ſeen from " the creation of the world," the inviſible things themſelves cannot be ſeen, but they may be ſeen by the creation, " and underſtood by the things " that are made, even his eternal power and " Godhead." So that there is a picture in the things which are made, whereby we may underſtand the things of God which are not made. And this picture, ſo far as I am concerned to explain it at preſent, is the threefold agency of the air, in which are repreſented the offices of the three divine agents in carrying on the work of ſalvation. The covenant itſelf, and the diſtinct offices of the perſons, were for the equal glory of each. It pleaſed the Father to get glory to the divine juſtice and holineſs by demanding full ſatisfaction for ſin.—He was the avenger of ſin, and therefore air in the action of fire is his emblem: he is called in ſcripture a conſuming, a devouring fire, and a jealous God. It pleaſed the Son to get glory to the divine love and mercy by paying this ſatisfaction, and therefore his conſtant name in ſcripture is light, which is the life of the material world, as he is the life of the ſpiritual world. And it pleaſed the Eternal

Spirit to get glory to all the divine attributes by inſpiring dead ſinners with a deſire to be raiſed to newneſs of life, and then by breathing it into their ſouls, and carrying it on through the life of grace until he bring them to the life of glory, and therefore he knows no other name in ſcripture than Spirit, or air in motion. The very ſame word that ſtands for the breath we breathe, both in the Hebrew and Greek, ſignifies the Holy Spirit. Why was this uſage of ſcripture? Was it from the poverty of theſe languages? No. It was to ſhew us the perfect likeneſs and reſemblance there is between what air does to the body, and what the Holy Spirit does to the ſoul. He is the breath of its life. Our ſouls can no more live to God, without his grace, than our bodies can without air. And after we have received his grace, are quickened and made alive by it, we want its influence every moment to ſupport and to carry on the life which he has given, in like manner as we want breath every moment to ſupport and to carry on our animal life; without it the body can do no work—without his grace the ſoul can do none. The neceſſity of his continually breathing into our ſouls the breath of life, is beautifully repreſented in the text. He is there deſcribed under his known emblem, wind or air in motion, and what air is to the trees of the garden, that is he to the ſpirits of men. Both are alike neceſſary. Nothing can grow in

the garden without air, neither can any grace grow in our ſouls unleſs the Holy Spirit act in theſe his two offices. "Awake, O north wind, "and come thou ſouth wind." The ſun is never in the northern point of the heavens, and therefore the north wind is cold, ſharp, and piercing—But the ſun is always in the ſouth, and therefore the ſouth wind is of a contrary quality, being warm, ſoft and comforting—the influences of both are neceſſary. The north wind was to awake. It was to be the firſt mover: the Holy Spirit was to begin in this office. For all men lay in the dead ſleep of ſin, without the leaſt motion of ſpiritual life, until the Holy Spirit awaken them. And his general method of awakening ſinners is to inſpire them with conviction of ſin. He opens their eyes, ſhews them their guilt, and lets them ſee their danger. And this is very plainful and diſtreſſing, and therefore it is compared to the north wind, which in the firſt work of grace awakens and acts with all the ſharpneſs of conviction upon the ſinners' heart. Here Chriſt calls it to act upon the faithful members of his church, not to bring them into the deep diſtreſs which perſons under conviction of ſin are commonly in, but to preſerve in them a lively ſenſe of their own inſufficiency, and of their dependance upon him. This is neceſſary to keep them always humble, and to make them always ready to aſcribe the glory of

what God has done in them to the riches of his free grace. And therefore we find that the Holy Spirit works this temper in all the faithful. None have ſuch clear humbling views of themſelves as they have, which empty them of ſelf and diſpoſe them to receive more and more of the ſweet influences of the Holy Spirit. And theſe are here deſcribed under the character of the ſouth wind—gentle, and mild, and comforting. It is obſervable, that the ſouth wind was not to awake, but to come—the ſinner muſt be awakened, and convinced of his guilt and danger before he is comforted. This is God's method of acting. His good Spirit firſt makes men feel how miſerable they are without a Saviour, and then he gives them the comfort of knowing their intereſt in him. He awakes and blows upon them like the ſharpeſt blaſts of the pinching north wind, and then he comes with the comfortable breathings of the gentle ſouth. Both theſe are neceſſary: for Chriſt calls for both to blow upon his garden. The original word here rendered to blow, is tranſlated in the 2d chapter of Geneſis, to breathe—when ſpoken of God's infuſing an immortal ſpirit into the body of Adam. "And the Lord God formed the man of the duſt "of the ground, and breathed into his noſtrils a "ſoul of lives." Elihu aſcribes this to the Holy Spirit, as an œconomical act of his office, Job xxxiii. 4. "The Spirit of God hath made me,

"and

" and the breath of the Almighty hath given me " life." In the very ſame manner our Lord repreſented the operation of the Holy Spirit, John xx. 22. " He breathed on his diſciples " and ſaid, receive ye the Holy Ghoſt," he breathed on them to denote by this outward and viſible ſign, the inward and ſpiritual breathing of the Holy Spirit, which he then gave them. Our ſouls are not alive to God, until he infuſe into them this divine breath, as you may read at large in the parable of the dry bones, Ezek. xxxvii. And his continual breathing upon the faithful ſoul is as neceſſary as this firſt act, and therefore it is ſpoken of in the text by the ſame word. " Breathe with every gracious influence, " O divine Spirit, upon my faithful people, that " the ſpices in them may flow out." The ſpices are certainly the graces of Chriſt, which he freely beſtows upon us who are united to him the head of life and influence, and which are quickened and exerciſed by his good Spirit. And when he enables us to bring them into continual uſe and practice, then they become an odour of a ſweet ſmell, a ſacrifice acceptable, well pleaſing unto God.

The words thus explained offer theſe particulars to our ſerious conſideration. Firſt, We are here reminded of the ſtate in which all men are while they continue in the barren deſolate wilderneſs of nature. Secondly, We learn by what

means Chriſt's people are tranſplanted out of the wilderneſs into the garden of the Church, where they grow and flouriſh; and thirdly, the cauſe is deſcribed that makes the ſpices in them to flow out, and enables them to bring forth fruit unto everlaſting life. Theſe are the great truths contained in the text, which I am under my ſecond general head to defend from the authority of God's word.

And firſt, our ſtate by nature is not a ſtate of grace. We are not born in the garden of the church, but in the wilderneſs of the world, in a dry barren land, where no water is—no dew nor rain, no kindly influence of heaven, to make us grow in grace. In this barren ſoil we are like the wild olive tree—we bear no fruit, until the heavenly huſbandman move us, and graft us contrary to nature in the good olive tree: for you know it is contrary to nature to graft a wild ſcion upon a good ſtock, it is againſt the common practice in all other trees but the olive. And therefore the apoſtle, Rom. xi. uſes this inſtance to repreſent the taking of the Gentiles into the church of God. The wild olive, like man in his natural ſtate, bears no fruit, but when he is grafted like the wild ſcion upon the good olive, then he bears forth fruit abundantly. He can bear no fruit of himſelf: for our bleſſed Saviour, ſpeaking of the branches not bearing fruit, except they abide in the ſtock upon which they

they were grafted, declares, No more can ye, except ye abide in me, for without me ye can do nothing. In yourſelves you are like the ground, which was curſed for your ſakes, and which naturally brings forth nothing but thorns and thiſtles.

When the Holy Spirit firſt begins to move in our hearts, he convinces us of theſe truths. He lets us ſee how barren we are by nature, and unfruitful. He ſhews us that in us dwelleth no good thing, and that we have nothing but ſin in ourſelves---He makes us feel the burden of our ſins---It preſſeth us ſore, and forceth us to cry out earneſtly for deliverance; when he has thus like the north wind, pierced us with the ſharpneſs of conviction, then is he ready to adminiſter comfort, by tranſplanting us out of the wilderneſs into the garden of his church, where, under his mild influence we may grow and flouriſh; and this is the ſecond doctrinal point in the text worthy of our conſideration.

We cannot tranſplant ourſelves, any more than a tree in a bad ſoil can tranſplant itſelf into a good one. But all the faithful are the trees of the Lord's planting. They are taken out of the wilderneſs, and removed into the paradiſe of God, where they are ſet, that they may be called trees of righteouſneſs, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified in their bearing much fruit. The whole work of bringing us

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from a barren to a fruitful ſtate, from a bad ſoil to a good one, is the Lord's. It is he who maketh us to be like a tree planted by the water-ſide, that will bring forth his fruit in due ſeaſon, his leaf alſo ſhall not wither and look, whatſoever he doth it ſhall proſper. As it is the action of the air, which firſt begins and afterwards carries on the vegetable life in every tree and plant---ſo is it the action of the Spirit which firſt begins and afterwards carries on ſpiritual life. We ſhould not even have a deſire for it, unleſs he put it into our hearts, and the carrying of it on is the continuance of his work, as much as the life of a tree depends on the continuance of the action of the air upon it: for we are helpleſs and without ſtrength either to begin or to carry on ſpiritual life, but as we are endued with power from on high. All the work is the Lord's: for it is he who worketh in us both to will and to do.

Now it is the ſame hand, which firſt plants us, that afterwards waters us with the dew of his heavenly grace, and makes us fruitful. This is the third doctrinal point in the text. All our graces come from the Holy Spirit. He firſt plants them in us, and then makes the ſpices of them to flow out. We cannot doubt of theſe truths, becauſe we have often aſſented to them, when we repeated the Nicene Creed. I wiſh we had all experienced the truth of the words---

" I believe

"I believe in the Holy Ghoſt the Lord and giver "of life"---he is the Lord and giver of all ſpiritual and divine life. The life itſelf, whereby we live unto God, and all the offices of it, worketh in us that one and the ſelf-ſame Spirit, dividing unto every man his own gifts, as he will. His own gifts are all the graces of the chriſtian life. Faith, hope, love, with every ſweet and heavenly temper are his gifts: for they are called the fruits of the Spirit. Sin is our own. Our ſoil bears nothing elſe. It grows weeds, thorns and thiſtles, without any cultivation. Our earth is a mother to them, but a ſtep-mother to every grace. Whatever there is in us beſides weeds, is the free gift of the Holy Spirit. Every good thought, and word, and work, every ſtep we take in our Chriſtian life is from him. And when he has inſpired any thing good into us, he does not leave us to ourſelves to improve it. No. It is God that giveth the increaſe. He worketh in us both to will and to do, according to the Pſalmiſt's prayer, "Stabliſh the thing, "O God, that thou haſt wrought in us." He ſtirs up his own gifts and graces---keeps them in exerciſe---and makes the ſpices of them to flow out. When we work in his ſtrength, we work what is well pleaſing. God the Father ſees us in his Son, partakers of his righteouſneſs, and led by his Spirit, and then the ſweet odour of our ſervices aſcends with acceptance to the throne

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of his grace. St. John has given us a beautiful image of the manner in which our very beſt ſervices, even the prayers and praiſes of God's own people, become acceptable. It is not for any merit in them. It is not becauſe they flow from fervent affections, that they are ſet before God as incenſe, and that the lifting up of our hands is an evening ſacrifice. But it is through Chriſt that our very prayers are pleaſing unto the Father; for thus we read—Rev. viii. 2. "That the an-
"gel of the covenant, our Lord Jeſus Chriſt,
"came and ſtood at the altar having a golden
"cenſer, and there was given unto him much
"incenſe, that he ſhould offer it with the pray-
"ers of all ſaints upon the golden altar, which
"was before the throne, and the ſmoke of the
"incenſe, which came with the prayers of the
"ſaints, aſcended up with acceptance before
"God out of the angel's hand." Here we ſee that our beſt prayers are nothing worth unleſs preſented before God by the Redeemer, and perfumed with the ſweet incenſe of his merits. When he preſents them before the throne of grace, they then become his prayers, and how can the Father deny the requeſts of his beloved Son? He will anſwer them, either by giving us what we aſk, or ſomething elſe, that he ſees will be much better for us. If then we would profit and be fruitful under the means of grace, if we would have the ſpices of our prayers and

praiſes

praiſes and our other religious ſervices to aſcend with acceptance before God, let us look up to the Holy Spirit, and intreat him to enable us to apply what has been ſaid to our own hearts. And may he blow upon us with his gracious inſpiration: while I am in the

Third place, Drawing ſome practical inferences from what has been ſaid.

The church is here compared to a garden, the faithful to trees of righteouſneſs, which the Lord hath planted, the Holy Spirit to wind, which is to blow upon the trees, and which makes the ſpices thereof to flow out, as the Holy Spirit brings forth into uſe and exerciſe the graces of the faithful. This is the doctrine; and that we may improve by it, let us examine ourſelves, whether we are as gardens and trees, whom the Lord hath planted, and in whom he is glorified. Have we been taken out of the wilderneſs, and tranſplanted into the paradiſe of God? Has the Holy Spirit awakened the north wind to convince us of ſin, and come with the ſouth wind to comfort us? Has he united us to Chriſt, engrafted us into the true vine, and do our tender grapes give a pleaſant ſmell? Does he call forth the graces which he has given us, and let the ſpices of them flow out in daily exerciſe, ſo that men ſeeing our fruitfulneſs glorify our Father which is in heaven? Happy are they who thus flouriſh like a palm-tree, and grow like a cedar

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in Libanus. If you be thus happy, my brethren, you cannot but know it, and feel it, and be thankful to God for it; and to thoſe amongſt you who are not in this happy caſe I will make my firſt application. May the Spirit of the living God open your underſtandings to profit from what I have to ſay.

If you be not united to Chriſt by faith on your part, and by the bond of the Spirit on Chriſt's part, and thereby enabled to bring forth fruit unto everlaſting life, conſider how dangerous your ſituation is. There are two ſpirits, which divide the world between them: you muſt be led by one or the other, by the Holy Spirit, or by the evil ſpirit. And you cannot be at a loſs to know under whoſe influence you are. By their fruits ye may know them. This is an infallible mark; which the apoſtle has largely inſiſted upon in the 5th chapter of the Galatians, where he has given us a deſcription at length of the fruits of the Spirit, and of the abominable deeds of the fleſh, which are the fruits of the devil. Read the deſcription, and then judge to whom you belong. What flows out of your hearts? What do your tongues delight to be talking of, and your hands to handle, and your feet to run into? What appears in your lives and converſations? Surely you cannot be at a loſs to know what ſort of fruit you bear. You cannot be ignorant whether you live to the fleſh, or

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to the Spirit. If you abound in the fruits of righteouſneſs, and the ſpices thereof are continually flowing out, a ſweet ſmelling ſavour acceptable to God and to all around you, if thus through the Spirit you bear your fruit unto holineſs, then the end will be everlaſting life; but if ye live to the fleſh, ſays God, ye ſhall die, die from God and glory, ye ſhall die both the firſt and the ſecond death.

While you are in this dangerous ſtate, how do you keep your conſciences quiet? Have you perſuaded yourſelves, that the doctrine is not true? Do you think there is no neceſſity for bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit? But remember that you muſt be bringing forth ſome fruit; and which would you bring forth? Whether, what is pleaſing to God, or what is diſpleaſing? Certainly what is pleaſing. And by whoſe power and might can you bring it forth? Not by your own. You are by nature helpleſs and without ſtrength to bring forth any acceptable fruit: for Chriſt himſelf ſpeaking, upon this very ſubject ſays, "Without me ye can do nothing." Be perſuaded then to apply to him for faith, that he may be ingrafted into him the true vine, and may bear much and ripe fruit to the glory of God.

But ſtill the doctrine does not appear to you in a clear light. What is the reaſon? It is becauſe you are in the fleſh, and in your natural

ſtate,

ſtate, and the motions of ſin which are by the law do work in your members to bring forth fruit unto death. Sin has ſuch power over you, that you love its dead works, and you hate holineſs. You would thank God for making you holy, juſt when you are dying; at the laſt hour you would like well enough to bring forth fruit unto God, and to have your ſpices flowing out, but you cannot bear the thoughts of living an holy life. Is not this your caſe? If it be, is not your faith a dead faith? And how then can you be a living member of Chriſt; for you were never ingrafted into him the true vine? And if you ſhould be cut off in this ſtate, read your ſentence. The God who is to judge you, has already declared---"If a man abide not in me "he is caſt forth as a branch, and is withered, "and men gather them, and caſt them into the "fire, and they are burned." May the Holy Spirit ſet this ſcripture home with full conviction upon your conſciences, that you may follow me with profit in my

Second application, to thoſe who are ſeeking to be united to Chriſt, and are deſirous of glorifying him by bringing forth much fruit. Examine carefully, my brethren, whether you ſeek aright. Have you a ſingle eye to God's glory? And do you indeed pray, that his will may be done in you; Would you receive Chriſt in all his offices? Do you deſire him as your king, and

would

would you have his kingdom ſet up within you to deſtroy in you the reign of ſin, as well as your prophet and prieſt to ſave you from the guilt and puniſhment of ſin? Are you willing he ſhould make you holy as well as happy? If it be the ſincere deſire of your heart to have the dominion of ſin deſtroyed in your mortal body, then you may take courage. And if you are alſo ſet upon attaining the graces of Chriſt, and would have them in uſe and exerciſe, the ſweet ſpices of them continually flowing out, then ſeek, and you ſhall find. You have the promiſes of God to rely upon, and he cannot deny himſelf. Seek him with humility in the ways, wherein he has promiſed to be found of them that ſeek him. Attend upon him in the ways of the ordinances. In them wait, and be aſſured, that when it will be for God's glory and your comfort, the Holy Spirit, who has already awakened the north wind to convince you of ſin, will alſo come with the mild ſouth wind to refreſh and comfort your hearts, and to unite you to Jeſus Chriſt, in whom you may bring forth much fruit. And to thoſe who are in this happy ſtate I make my third and laſt inference.

The faithful in the text deſired the Holy Spirit would make them more lively and fruitful. And the faithful ſtill have the ſame deſires, which are at this time more fervent and earneſt, becauſe they hear it objected to their moſt holy faith,

faith, that it makes no change in mens lives and converſations: for which reaſon they pray for more grace, and to have it more in uſe and exerciſe, that they may adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things. They would have all men, who ſee their lives, to behold the great change that the Holy Spirit has wrought in them. While they grew in the wilderneſs they were like other wild barren trees, but being removed into the garden of the church of Chriſt, and become trees of the Lord's planting, they now bear much fruit. And like as the air draws forth the rich fragrancy of the aromatic flowers, and diffuſes their ſweet odours all around: ſo the Holy Spirit keeps in action the graces of the faithful, and makes the ſpices thereof to flow out to the glory of God, and to the delight and good of mankind.

Pray then, my chriſtian friends and brethren, for the continual influences of the Holy Spirit: theſe are as neceſſary for the growth of grace in your ſoul, as the blowing of the air is to the growth of the fruits of the garden. Convinced of this great truth, and you are convinced of it by happy experience, apply to the Holy Spirit for what you ſtand in need of every moment. And pray him to awaken the north wind, whenever its ſharp influences are neceſſary, either to awaken ſecure ſinners, or to quicken and ſtir up the graces of the faithful, and then to come like

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the ſouth wind with his mild and comforting influences, blowing upon the garden, upon the believer, and making the ſpices thereof, the graces in him, to flow out. And thus may the Holy Spirit enable you and me to experience this ſcripture in its fulleſt ſenſe to the glory of God, and to the good of others, and to the comfort of our own ſouls. May the bleſſed and adorable Jeſus ſend his good Spirit to lead us all to, and to graft us all into him, the true vine, that we may live unto God, and flouriſh, and be fruitful. Grant, O gracious Saviour, that every branch in thee, which beareth fruit, may be purged, and may bring forth more fruit, even rich and ripe fruit, which endureth unto everlaſting life, to the honour of the holy, bleſſed, and glorious Trinity, three ſelf-exiſtent perſons in one Jehovah, to whom we give equal praiſe, majeſty, and dominion, now and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON VII.

CHAP. V. VER. 16.

Yea, he is altogether lovely.

THE Holy Spirit puts theſe words into the mouth of the believer. He has been drawng a character of his beloved Jeſus, and has compared him to the moſt uſeful and noble objects in the creation, in order to ſet forth his due praiſe. But upon reviewing the character he finds it fall ſhort of the perfection of his divine Saviour. It did not come up to the idea which he himſelf had formed of him, and therefore he finiſhes in one word, "Yea, he is altogether lovely." He is all lovelineſs.—Whatever is lovely and deſireable upon earth, whatever is lovely and deſireable in heaven—all the graces of time, and all the bleſſings of eternity, center in him as their proper ſource, and flow from him as their proper fountain. Whatever can be propoſed to the underſtanding as excellent, whatever the will rightly diſpoſed can deſire, whatever the heart and the affections can be ſet upon and find happineſs in, all this is to be met with in the Lord Jeſus, and no where elſe: for, "he is al-"together lovely," all beauty, all excellency in himſelf. And this conſideration ſhould endear

to

to us his inherent excellencies, that he is willing to communicate them. This ſhould give a new grace to each, and make it more valuable in our eyes. He is not only altogether lovely, but will alſo make vile and abominable ſinners, when they apply to him for his righteouſneſs, altogether lovely in the ſight of God. He will waſh them clean from all their ſins in his moſt precious blood, and will clothe them with his all-perfect righteouſneſs, in which they ſhall appear at the bar of juſtice without ſpot of ſin unto ſalvation.

Now ſince the Lord Jeſus is all lovelineſs, what can be the reaſon, that he does not appear altogether lovely in the eyes of men? The generality of them ſee nothing lovely in him. What was formerly ſaid upon the occaſion is ſtill true, "Lord, who hath believed our report?" The word of God reports him to be altogether lovely, and the miniſters of God preach his lovelineſs as teſtified by ſcripture and their own experience, but worldly men ſee no form nor comelineſs in him that they ſhould deſire him. They ſee more lovelineſs in ſin, in pleaſure, in money, in diverſions, than they hope to find in our Lord and Saviour. This dangerous miſtake ariſes either from the judgment or the affections —either they do not ſee how perfectly lovely Jeſus Chriſt is, or elſe the affections are prejudiced againſt him; but wherever the miſtake

lies, I will offer ſome ſcripture arguments to remove it, and may God accompany them with the effectual working of his power, while I am ſetting before you

Firſt, What Jeſus Chriſt is as man.

Secondly, What he is as God. And

Thirdly, What he is as the incarnate God—as God and man united in one perſon. And in each of theſe reſpects I hope the Holy Spirit will convince you, that Jeſus Chriſt is altogether lovely.

And firſt, Let us view him as man. I mention not his perſon, though the Pſalmiſt ſays, he was fairer than the children of men. The excellencies and endowments of his mind were ſo great and uncommon, that I need not inſiſt on a leſs important part of the ſubject. For conſider, what is it that you admire and love in any perſon? Do extraordinary gifts or graces draw your eſteem? Great abilities, or great virtues? Behold every thing that can adorn or dignify the human nature meets in the man Chriſt Jeſus. If true wiſdom and learning be your admiration, it is written, "that in him "were laid up all the treaſures of wiſdom and "knowledge." Do you think, that learning never appears ſo graceful, as when it is ſet off with the charms of virtue? Then look upon Jeſus. In him you ſee not this or that particular virtue only, but virtue itſelf in a body of fleſh;

and therefore made fleſh, that he might let his graces ſhine before men, and communicate their ſweet influence. He was goodneſs itſelf, and he went about doing good to the ſouls and to the bodies of men, teaching and enlightening the ignorance of their underſtanding, and regulating the depravity of the will and affections, and healing all manner of ſickneſs, and all manner of bodily infirmities. There was not a malady which ſin had brought upon ſoul or body, but what he proved himſelf almighty to heal. Was there ever ſuch a character as this? So univerſally amiable and lovely? Here is a perſon of all the ſons of men the greateſt and happieſt in himſelf, and capable of making us great and happy: yea therefore made man, that he might communicate to us his greatneſs and happineſs. and ſhall any of us be ſo far loſt to all ſenſe of what is great and happy, as not to admire this character? Shall men adore and idolize the true patriot, whoſe breaſt burns with love for his country, and who freely hazards his all to ſave it? And ſhall the very ſame men be wanting in eſteem for the great patriot of the whole world? How abſurd, how inconſiſtent would this be? What a contradiction is it to throw away all our admiration upon leſſer excellencies, and to have none to ſpare for him, who had every excellency that can adorn the human nature either for beauty

beauty or uſe, and who conſequently had every thing that could make him altogether lovely?

If I ſhould ſtop here, enough has been ſaid to place the man Jeſus high above the ſons of men; but I have mentioned the leaſt and loweſt part of his character. He was not only great and good, but had alſo one thing peculiar to himſelf, that no ſinful frailty or weakneſs ever ſullied his greatneſs or his goodneſs. He was a perfect man. You will not find any other character without its ſpots and blemiſhes, becauſe there is no man living without ſin, our nature itſelf being ſinful, and ſin is the cauſe of all our imperfections. The darkneſs of the underſtanding in the things of God comes from ſin, and the weakneſs of the memory, and the continual inclinations of the will to evil, and the ſtrong and unlawful attachment of the heart to the world, and to the things of it, ſpring from the ſame fountain of ſin. But the holy Jeſus had no ſin, and conſequently none of the imperfections which ſin has brought upon us. When a truth was propoſed to his underſtanding, there was no obſtruction in the faculty; he comprehended it clearly and fully. His will was in harmony with God's will—"I delight, ſays he, to do thy will, "O my God;" and he did it with all his heart, always and perfectly. And accordingly we read of him in the Pſalms, "That he ſpake the truth "in his heart," his tongue and his heart always went

went together--" he had clean hands," not once defiled with any ſinful pollution—" and a pure " heart," not one evil thought had ever ariſen in it—nay, " his mind had never been lift up " unto vanity," not one vain thought had ever paſt through his mind. Judge then how perfectly immaculate he muſt have been: for who is there among us, that has not had a thouſand, yea ten thouſand vain and wandering thoughts? Who does not find them paſſing through his mind againſt his will, and intruding into his hours of devotion, from which he had ſhut them out, and haunting him even at the Lord's table? But Chriſt's pure and ſpotleſs mind never admitted one vain thought. He was the very image of God, in which the firſt Adam was made, and he did not deface it as the firſt Adam did, but he kept it holy and undefiled. The ſcripture aſſures us of it—" He was made ſin for us, who " knew no ſin." He aſſerts it of himſelf—" The " prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing " in me." Happy for us ſatan could find in him no part of our fallen image, and therefore the accuſer of the brethren could lay no charge againſt his perſon, nor conſequently againſt the merit of thoſe actions and ſufferings, whereby we, who have by nature borne the image of the earthy, may, through grace, bear the image of the heavenly Adam, who is the Lord from Heaven.

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My brethren, weigh and conſider this part of our Lord's character. Is he not altogether lovely? And have you then no praiſe or admiration to beſtow upon him? Whatever you ſee reaſon to admire in any man, if it be indeed praiſe-worthy, it was in its perfect degree in Chriſt Jeſus; and therefore certainly you will not with-hold from him his tribute of praiſe. If your praiſe follow excellency, behold here is a man not only the chief among ten thouſand, but alſo the chief of the human race. A man that never had his fellow---a perfect man. He has every good gift, and every grace that can be in man. And will you not admire and eſteem ſuch a character? Does he not appear to you altogether amiable? If you ſee any thing wanting in him, it is an argument of your own imperfection: for he, whoſe all-ſearching eye trieth the very hearts and reins, ſaw no way of wickedneſs in him. He pronounced him to be his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleaſed, and he honoured him with a wonderful glory, never communicated to any creature, but to the man Jeſus; he was united to God the Son in ſo cloſe and intimate an union that God and man were one Chriſt, as much as the reaſonable ſoul and fleſh are one man. O how great is the myſtery of godlineſs---God manifeſt in the fleſh! How can we ſufficiently admire and adore it! And how greatly ſhould it endear to us the humanity of our Lord, that it

was

was the ſacred temple of the Godhead, inhabited by God the Son, and honoured with the more immediate preſence of the Father and the Holy Spirit: for it pleaſed the Father that in him ſhould all fulneſs dwell, even the fulneſs of the Godhead bodily. Surely then the man Jeſus was altogether lovely; ſince he was lovely in the eyes of the eternal Trinity, who vouchſafed to dwell and to make their abode in him. Oh, bluſh then and be aſhamed, ye ſinful worms, who ſee nothing lovely in Jeſus Chriſt, ſince the moſt bleſſed God ſees him altogether lovely. Can ye find no comelineſs in him, of whom the Father hath ſaid---"This is my beloved Son, in whom "I am well pleaſed." And are not ye well pleaſed with him, ye ungrateful men, for whom he was made man? Pardon, Lord Jeſus, our low opinion of the dignity of thy human nature. Let thy good Spirit teach us to form more exalted ideas of thee, while I am

Secondly, Speaking of the glory of thy divine nature.

All lovelineſs is certainly in God, inherent in him as the fountain, from whence flows whatever is lovely in the creation. And if Jeſus Chriſt be the true God, then he muſt have every attribute and perfection, that can endear him to his creatures, and make him altogether lovely in their eyes: and that he is the true God is as certain as that there is a God. The ſcripture

has

has given him the names and the attributes of God, and has aſcribed to him the works, which none but the almighty Creator, and the all-wiſe Preſerver of the world could perform. He is called Jehovah, the incommunicable name of the Divine Eſſence, and Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. He is ſaid to be omniſcient and omnipreſent, to have created all things, and to uphold them by the word of his power: he came in the fleſh to redeem them, and there is a day at hand, when he will come to judge them. And will any man ſay, that theſe are the attributes and works of a creature? Do they not evidently belong to the bleſſed and only potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, of whom the Old Teſtament ſays, that he is God the Saviour, and that there is none other, as Iſaiah xlv. 21, 22. "There is no God elſe beſide "me, a juſt God and a Saviour, there is none "beſide me---Look unto me, and be ye ſaved all "the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there "is none elſe." The apoſtle teaches the ſame doctrine in the New Teſtament, where he ſays (Rom. ix. 5.) "That Chriſt is over all God bleſſed for ever. *Amen.*"

In theſe two paſſages (not to mention others) the Saviour is expreſsly ſaid to be God---God over all, and conſequently he muſt be altogether lovely; for every perfection which has any claim to our love is inherent in him, and whatever we ſee of

lovelineſs in the works of nature owes its being to his divine wiſdom, and power, and goodneſs; ſo that whenever you ſee any thing worthy of your admiration, it ſhould lead your thoughts up to Jeſus Chriſt, the almighty creator and preſerver of it. If you ſtop ſhort of him, you rob him of his honour: becauſe its lovelineſs is his. And what then muſt he be, how perfectly lovely and amiable, who is the great parent and author of all lovelineſs? Whatever ſweetneſs and excellency you find in the creatures is but a faint ray of the Creator's perfections, and was reflected from him upon them, to give you an idea of his lovelineſs. Admire him therefore in it. In all the beauties of nature you may trace the beauties of Jeſus Chriſt the God of nature, who is the firſt cauſe, from whom they all flow, and who is the laſt end, into whom they will be all finally reſolved.

But I need not enlarge upon this point. God has certainly every perfection in himſelf. He is altogether lovely. But in what reſpects does he appear ſo to ſinners? While they are under guilt, and ſenſible of their danger, they have no reaſon to love God: for being tranſgreſſors of his holy law, condemned by its juſt ſentence, which conſcience owns to be juſt, ſubject to preſent death and to eternal miſery, how can they ſee any thing lovely in that God who may get glory to all his attributes by their deſtruction? In this

this view they muſt ſee every thing that can make God terrible, but nothing to render him lovely. Until they know, that he will be reconciled unto them, and forgive them all their ſins, they can have no reaſon to love him. The goſpel alone can ſet forth to them the lovelineſs of God; which it does by revealing unto us an incarnate God, God and man united in one Chriſt, who is altogether lovely in the eyes of his redeemed people, as I purpoſed in the third place to conſider.

All our hopes of heaven are founded upon this truth, that God was in Chriſt reconciling the world unto himſelf: for if the man Jeſus was not united to the moſt bleſſed God, our religion is the groſſeſt idolatry, and chriſtians are of all men moſt miſerable. But the ſcripture has left no room to doubt of the union of the two natures in one Chriſt. The word was God, and the word was made fleſh, ſays St. John, ſo that God the word was made fleſh and incarnate. God was manifeſt in the fleſh, ſays the beloved apoſtle Paul. And the reaſon was, he was manifeſted for our ſalvation. And it was expedient, that the Saviour ſhould be both God and man, becauſe he was to obey and to ſuffer for us as man, and to merit by his obedience and ſufferings as God, and thereby to be a complete Saviour. Accordingly he who thought it no robbery to be equal with God the Father, took upon

upon him the form of a ſervant and was made man. He obeyed, he ſuffered, he became obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs; and when all the ends for which he obeyed, ſuffered, and died, were anſwered, then it was not poſſible that he ſhould be holden any longer of death. Juſtice releaſed him on the third day from the priſon of the grave, and he roſe again triumphant from the dead; whereby believers had full evidence given them, that all the demands of the law were ſatisfied, that Chriſt's ſufferings had made a full atonement for what they ſhould have ſuffered, that he had taken out the ſting of death, and had opened unto them the gate of everlaſting life: for as he ſtood in their place, as their great repreſentative, all his victories are theirs, and by faith they know and are aſſured of their intereſt in them. And through him, who loved them and gave himſelf for them, they ſhall be ſaved from ſin, and ſatan, from ſuffering and death, from hell and everlaſting torments. And they ſhall not only be ſaved through him from theſe their ſpiritual enemies, but they ſhall alſo receive joys unſpeakable and full of glory, a happineſs greater than tongue can utter, or heart conceive, a crown incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away: for they ſhall be made kings and prieſts under God and the Father, and they ſhall reign for ever and ever in fulneſs of joy, both in body and in ſoul; and all this

this ſhall be the free gift of God through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.

Thus the Lord Jeſus under the character of the incarnate God is altogether lovely. He has every grace and perfection, that can render him amiable in the eyes of believers: for to them that believe he is precious. And he has every thing that can recommend him to the eſteem of awakened and convinced ſinners. He is juſt ſuch a Saviour as they want. He has every thing to give, that they ſtand in need of. The God-man has an inexhauſtible fountain of grace, which always ſtands open for the relief of weary and heavy-laden ſinners, who come unto him ſeeking reſt unto their ſouls. He calls unto them with his ſweet voice---Ho, every one that thirſteth, come ye to the waters of comfort and ſalvation. Lo, here is pardon and peace, righteouſneſs and holineſs. All the graces that can make you lovely in the ſight of God the Father---all the glories that can make you happy with him in eternity, are in my power to give. I purchaſed them for ſuch ſinners as you are, and I give them freely---Aſk and ye ſhall have, ſeek and ye ſhall find. And what ſhould hinder them from anſwering him? Yea, they will anſwer. This is the very language of their hearts---Lord Jeſus, help our unbelief. We are convinced, that all the graces of time, and all the glories of eternity are thy free gift, and we bleſs and praiſe thy holy name for putting it into our

hearts

hearts to ſeek for the enjoyment of thoſe graces and glories. All the lovelineſs of this lower world, all the lovelineſs of heaven itſelf is thine, centers in thy perſon as in the incarnate God, and flows from thee as God made man, on purpoſe to make us filthy and abominable ſinners lovely in the ſight of thy heavenly Father. Oh that we may ſee clearly our intereſt in thee, and may know the incarnate God to be our Lord and our Saviour, and then our faith will behold thee altogether lovely, and ſhall admire no lovelineſs, unleſs it bear thy fair image, and what leads us through its beauties to adore and praiſe thine.

And if Chriſt appear in this amiable light to thoſe, who are only ſeeking, and deſiring to experience his love and mercy, what thoughts muſt believers entertain of him? How muſt they value him? Certainly, he is with them altogether lovely. And have they not good reaſon to think him ſo? For what lovelineſs is there in heaven or earth but his? Is there not in his manhood every grace that can adorn the human nature? Is there not in his Godhead every infinite and eternal perfection? And do not theſe perfections flow through the manhood of the incarnate God to render vile and polluted ſinners altogether amiable and lovely? God and man were united in one Chriſt in order to ſave them from their ſins, and he puts them into perfect poſſeſſion of many of the benefits of his ſalvation, as pledges and

and earneſts of his beſtowing more: for he now awakens them and raiſes them from the death of ſin to newneſs of life, he pardons their paſt rebellions, ſends his good Spirit into their hearts to ſhed abroad in them the comforts of his pardoning love, to fill them with joy and peace in believing, to enable them to mortify the body of ſin, and to put on the new man which after the image of God is created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs. All this is preſent ſalvation, the happineſs of which is great beyond deſcription. Oh, come then, my brethren, taſte, and ſee what the Lord Jeſus has to give. Whatever your ſtate and circumſtances are, he can make you completely happy: for he has engaged that all things adverſe as well as proſperous ſhall work together for good, for preſent and eternal good, to them that love him. And when you can love him, becauſe he firſt loved you, then you will find that he is able to do exceeding abundantly for you, above all that you can either aſk or think.

Upon this ſhort view of our Lord's character, it appears, that he is altogether lovely. He certainly has, as man, as God, and as the incarnate God, every perfection of heaven and earth. All that is amiable in itſelf, or ought to appear amiable to us, meets in him, and therefore if we love what is amiable in itſelf, or what is good to us, we ought to give the firſt place in our hearts to the Lord Jeſus. And does he then reign in them?

them? Is he the ſole Lord of your affections? Do you, my brethren, love him in ſincerity, with a pure uncorrupt love, and with all your hearts, and with all your minds, and with all your ſtrength? Is his kingdom ſet up within you, and is it your delight to do the will of your Lord, and of your God? Grace be with all them, who thus love the Lord Jeſus. But alas! their number is but ſmall: for melancholy it is to ſee, how little the generality of men called chriſtians love him, who is altogether lovely. The tranſient periſhing objects of ſenſe, the vanities, the follies of life, appear more lovely and have more of their hearts than that God, whoſe ſervants and worſhippers they profeſs themſelves to be. Nay, the abominable deformity, and horrid uglineſs of ſin ſeem to them more lovely. What can be the reaſon, that men profeſſing chriſtianity ſhould be ſo inconſiſtent, and ſhould make ſuch a wrong judgment in ſo plain a caſe? Surely they muſt lay under ſome great deluſion: for not to love him whom they call their God, and who is altogether lovely, is both a diſgrace to their boaſted reaſon, and is alſo acting againſt their own preſent and eternal intereſt. Sin is the cauſe of this monſtrous deluſion. It blinds the ſinner's underſtanding, that he does not ſee his want of a Saviour, and conſequently he cannot judge of the Saviour's worth. While he thinks himſelf whole, he ſees no occaſion for the phyſician. But ſo

ſoon as conſcience awakes, and he is made ſenſible of his guilt, and feels his miſery, then he will deſire the aſſiſtance of the great phyſician of ſouls, and will begin to value him. The more deeply he is convinced of ſin, the more earneſtly will he apply to the Lord Jeſus who is able to ſave him from his ſins. And as he partakes of the graces and bleſſings of ſalvation, the Saviour will grow more and more lovely in his eyes. And when conſcience ceaſes to accuſe, when the law no longer condemns, but he finds joy and peace in believing, then the Saviour will be altogether lovely. The believer will form higher ideas of him, than he can find words to expreſs: yea, he knows, that his ideas of him cannot riſe up to the greatneſs of his Lord's merits. As man he is far exalted above the children of men, as God he is over all bleſſed for ever, and as God incarnate, he is the continual joy of the believer's heart, and the ſweet ſubject of his praiſe here in time, and the ſong of the glorified ſpirits in heaven will be upon the riches of his grace, and they will never be able to exhauſt the ſubject, or to ſearch it to the bottom, becauſe the riches of Chriſt are unſearchable and infinite, and eternal.

Here then we are come to the root of the matter. Jeſus is altogether lovely; but why do not all men who profeſs to worſhip him think him ſo? Becauſe they do not find their want of him. They are under no concern about their ſins,

ſins, and have no deſire to know the pardon of them, and therefore they ſee no reaſon to eſteem the Saviour of ſinners. They are ignorant of their own wants, and therefore they know not his worth; but baſely, wickedly prefer the worthleſs things of this life to the Lord and giver of life and glory. Is not this the ſad ſtate of the generality of our people? And does not this evidently prove, that they are chriſtians only in name? They have none of the ſpirit and power of their religion, but in their lives diſhonour that holy name by which they are called.

My brethren, are any of you in this ſtate? Look up to God and beg of him to ſhew you the true ſtate of your ſouls, that you may ſee how much you are concerned in what has been ſaid. Are you indeed lovers of the Lord Jeſus? is he in your eyes altogether lovely? When the objects of ſenſe flatter, and preſent themſelves to your choice in the moſt alluring dreſs, then do you ſee your beloved Saviour the chief among ten thouſand? Can you give up ten thouſand of them for him? For him can you reject with diſdain all that the world calls great and honourable, looking upon Jeſus to be all and in all? If you are not in this ſtate, be aſſured that your hearts are not right with God: and if you neither ſee the perfect lovelineſs of Jeſus Chriſt, nor deſire to ſee it, then you are ſtill under the power of ſin, deluded and blinded by it, and if God does not open

your eyes to ſee the deluſion, death will ſoon open them to your everlaſting confuſion. But if God has convinced you of ſin, and you find your want of a Saviour, wait upon him, and he will give you many happy proofs of his perfect lovelineſs. You will experience his love in pardoning your ſins, in juſtifying you from the guilt of them in making you the children of God, and in fitting you for his heavenly kingdom. Daily as you find your intereſt more clearly in his redeeming love, you will partake more and more of his exceeding great and precious promiſes, whereby your love to him will increaſe, and you will find him more lovely. Faith will open to you the riches of his love, and ſhew you how precious he is: for to them that believe he is precious---He is precious ndeed to the believer: and he is not precious to all men, becauſe they do not ſee their want of him, nor know what his free grace can do for them: for he has invited all weary and heavy-laden ſinners to come and experience how happy he can make them. Whatever their wants may be, he is willing and able to ſupply them. If ye be but ſenſible of them, aſk, my brethren, and he will relieve you. Be ye ever ſo black in yourſelves, he can make you comely. Be your ſins ever ſo many, ever ſo heinous, in his righteouſneſs you may be preſented before God the Father without ſpot of ſin unto ſalvation. Have you thought ever ſo meanly of him, his good

Spirit

Spirit can give you reaſon to entertain more noble ſentiments. Your ingratitude, your very blaſphemies againſt him may be pardoned, and much ingratitude, and many blaſphemies are no bar to his free grace. This is the ſweeteſt part of our Lord's character, and ought above all to endear him unto thoſe who ſee their want of his help. Let them come ever ſo late, ever ſo guilty, the arms of his mercy are open to receive them. If you ſee nothing but ſin in yourſelves, yet go to him. His blood cleanſeth from all ſin. Implore his mercy, and ſee whether he will caſt you out. Be not diſcouraged by looking into yourſelves; you may be deformed enough, but remember that he is altogether lovely; and by faith you will know his lovelineſs is yours. He will waſh you clean from every ſtain of ſin in his moſt precious blood, and will preſent you before his Father in ſpotleſs purity. Be ye ever ſo defiled with uncleanneſs, have luſt, drunkenneſs, or gluttony polluted the body, and the love of the world, and of the things of the world ſtill more polluted the ſoul, yet the fountain is open. Go, waſh, and be clean. Sins deep as ſcarlet ſhall be as white as ſnow, ſins like crimſon ſhall be as wool. They that are waſhed in the Redeemer's blood, ſtand before God's tribunal, as white as ſnow, without ſpot of ſin unto ſalvation.

My dearly-beloved brethren, can ye believe theſe things, do ye aſſent to them, and yet are

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you not determined to apply to Jeſus Chriſt for his graces and bleſſings? He invites you to come to him, and will you not come? Be ye ever ſo unworthy, he will make you worthy. Be ye ever ſo abominable in the ſight of God, he will make you lovely. All your wants he is able and willing to ſupply. Why then do you chuſe to live without his graces and bleſſings? They may be had freely. Aſk, and ye ſhall have. Only expreſs your wants. Beg a ſupply from his bounty, and he, that has done all for you, will do all in you. Go then with your wants whatever they be, to the throne of grace, and the incarnate God will ſupply them. He is more ready to give than you can be to aſk. His heart is large and open. It is the ſame tender heart which once bled to death for ſinners, it cannot want love. And he is now on the throne of glory; he cannot want power. Apply to this loving God and Saviour of ſinners, and he will convince you of your wants, and of his worth. He will beſtow upon you out of his fulneſs grace for grace, until you acknowledge with thankful hearts that the Lord Jeſus is altogether lovely.

My chriſtian brethren, you can bear me witneſs, that I have ſpoken but a ſmall part of the Redeemer's praiſe: for you believe him to be a true and very man, and true and very God, united in one Chriſt, and you know by ſure ſcripture-marks and evidences, that the one Chriſt is your Saviour; whereby you are intereſted in all that he did

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and ſuffered as man, and merited as God, and has now as king-mediator to beſtow. Being thus enabled to ſay, "My beloved is mine, and I "am his," you are convinced that your beloved is above all bleſſing and praiſe. You cannot reach the greatneſs of his merits. The poverty of language, the weakneſs of the human underſtanding, the coldneſs of your affections are ſo many hindrances to your ſpeaking of your God and Saviour as he deſerves. And when you try to get over theſe obſtacles, and have ſome hopes of ſucceſs, yet then you find the corruptible body ſo preſſeth down the ſoul, and the earthly tabernacle ſo weigheth down the mind, that praiſe dies away upon your lips. But you hope there is a time at hand, when your praiſes will be more perfect. When you ſhall be freed from all the frailties of this mortal life, you will then be better able to diſcover, and more conſtantly diſpoſed to celebrate, the lovelineſs of your redeeming God. But even you will not be equal to the ſubject. Your praiſes will be but finite, and the adorable Redeemer is infinite. There is no proportion between them. No more than between time and eternity; and ſuppoſe you continue your praiſes to eternity, yet your happineſs, your crowns of glory and palms of victory, your ſtanding confirmed in bliſs are the free gift of God in Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. And how then can you worthily

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extol the riches of his free grace? How can you pay the debt that you owe to free grace? When you have praiſed him for millions of years, Jeſus is ſtill as lovely, your praiſe as much due, your joy in offering it as great, as when you began. There is ſtill the ſame majeſty in the brightneſs of that glory, which ſhines in the face of Jeſus Chriſt. He is the light of the heavenly Jeruſalem, and light you know is ſweet, yea a pleaſant thing it is to behold the ſun. Oh how ſweet, how pleaſant then muſt it be to ſee the ſun of righteouſneſs ſhining in his glory? Surely he will then appear altogether lovely. Bleſſed are the eyes that ſhall then ſee the king in his beauty, and happy, for ever happy, are they who ſhall then praiſe him; but even then the higheſt ſtrain of praiſe of angels and men united will not come up to the greatneſs of his merit. He will be more lovely than all the tongues of all the heavenly hoſt will be able to expreſs. And if the glorified ſpirits thus fail,

O thou incarnate God, whoſe glory the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain, pardon the low opinion we entertain of thine infinite excellencies, pardon the imperfect manner in which we have been ſpeaking and thinking of thee. Thou knoweſt, Lord, that we deſire to know thee more, and to praiſe thee better. Ariſe then, O thou bright and morning-ſtar, and ſhine into our hearts, diſpelling the darkneſs of

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our underſtandings, and taking away the depravity of our wills and affections, that we may ſee thy lovelineſs, and our intereſt in it; and enable us daily to love thee more and more, until we behold thee face to face, and then we ſhall know, that our Saviour and our God is altogether lovely. Oh thou adorable Jeſus, admit us all to this bleſſed viſion and fruition of thy Godhead. May all this congregation be in the happy number of thy redeemed people, who are to praiſe and admire thine infinite lovelineſs for ever and ever. So be it to the honour and glory of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three perſons in one Divine Eſſence, to whom be equal praiſe and worſhip in heaven and earth, in time and in eternity. *Amen* and *Amen*.

SERMON VIII.

CHAP. V. VER. 16.

This is my beloved, and this is my friend.

IN the laſt diſcourſe I endeavoured to recommend to you ſome of the lovelineſs of Jeſus Chriſt. It was only ſome part of his lovelineſs: for we know it at preſent but in part. It is infinite, and ſurpaſſeth all underſtanding. The moſt enlightened mind cannot fully comprehend it, no not in heaven. We ſhall not be able in eternity to diſcover all the perfections of our incarnate God, and how then can we think or ſpeak worthily of them at preſent? We muſt fall below the majeſty of the ſubject, but that is no reaſon we ſhould not treat of it. It is our duty and intereſt to think and to ſpeak of our bleſſed Saviour in the moſt ſublime ideas, and in the higheſt expreſſions, becauſe we cannot exceed the greatneſs of his merits. He is above all bleſſing and praiſe; and ſo you will believe, when you know him to be your Saviour. When the ſpirit of wiſdom and revelation enlightens the eyes of your underſtanding, then you will behold ſome of Chriſt's lovelineſs; and when you are enabled to ſay with true faith—"This is my

"beloved,

" beloved, and this is my friend"---then his lovelineſs will appear to you with a new grace and excellency, becauſe you will then ſee your intereſt in it.

This is the particular view, in which I ſhall conſider our Lord's lovelineſs at preſent. The believer knows him to be his beloved, and the perfections of Chriſt appear with a peculiar beauty through this endearing relation, becauſe he can truly ſay---He that has theſe perfections is my beloved, and my friend, he has them for me, I have a ſure intereſt in them, in time, and in eternity. My brethren, do the perfections of Chriſt appear to you in this light? Can you take up the words of the text, and repeat them from your own experience? I fear there are not many of us who can: for the generality of men, called Chriſtians, chooſe other beloveds, and other friends, than Jeſus Chriſt. Many of them have no love for him, or if he has any place at all, yet he has not the firſt place in their hearts and affections, no not even in theirs, to whom he has been moſt bountiful. Where his favours have been great, there one might expect great returns of love, but we find no ſuch thing in fact. Not many worldly-wiſe and learned, not many rich and noble repay his favours with thankfulneſs. Though Chriſt be altogether lovely, and ought to appear ſo to them, yet few of them love him. What can be the reaſon, that men of genius,

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whom Chriſt has bleſſed with great gifts and talents, ſhould make him no ſuitable returns of gratitude? And that men who profeſs themſelves to be his worſhippers ſhould have no love for their God? The true cauſe is, they are in love with ſin, and it blinds them. Chriſt is all beauty, but they have no eyes to ſee it; no not even a deſire to ſee it, until they begin to find the exceeding ſinfulneſs of ſin. When conſcience is uneaſy about the pardon of their ſins, and they feel their want of a Saviour, then they will begin to deſire his ſalvation, and God will hear their deſires, and will open their eyes to ſee a precious Chriſt, and will give them faith to believe in him to the ſaving of the ſoul. Faith makes Chriſt appear precious: for it is the proper office of faith to enable us to behold Chriſt's excellencies, and it is the proper work of that faith, which worketh my love, to let us know our intereſt in them, by which every excellency appears to us more lovely. And the text deſcribes this office, and alſo this work of faith. The believer firſt declares that Chriſt is altogether lovely, and then that he knew Chriſt's lovelineſs was his. "This is my beloved, and this is "my friend."—He is my beloved on whom my heart and mine affections are entirely placed, becauſe he firſt loved me, and gave himſelf for me. He has ſhed abroad his love in my heart, and I know that my beloved is mine, and I am his.—

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He is mine—my friend—who has my welfare at heart, and who will deny me nothing that can make me happy in time and in eternity. May the Spirit of the Lord Jeſus open all your underſtandings to ſee, and all your hearts to receive theſe comfortable truths, while I am diſcourſing upon the words, and opening the ſweet doctrine contained in them, by ſhewing

Firſt, What Chriſt has done to make himſelf the beloved and the friend of every believer.

Secondly, The believer's knowledge of his intereſt in it, before he could ſay, this is my beloved, and this is my friend.

Thirdly, From whence aroſe the certainty of his knowledge.

Fourthly, The happineſs he had in knowing certainly, that Chriſt was his beloved and his friend. And then I will apply the whole as God ſhall enable me to your conſciences.

And Firſt, I am to ſhew what Chriſt has done to make himſelf the beloved, and the friend of every believer.

If men followed the common inſtincts of nature, and had no bias to turn them from their own intereſt, he would be the beloved friend of the whole world: for is there a more natural or ſtronger inſtinct, then the love of pleaſure and the hatred of pain? We are ſubject to innumerable pains both in body and ſoul, in this world

world and in the next, and we have very few enjoyments, that can be called real pleaſures. Sin was the cauſe of all our miſery. It robbed us of our pleaſures, and brought upon us our pains. All was good, until ſin entered into the world; but when it entered, all evil entered with it, the evil of pain to torment our bodies and bring them down to the grave of death, the evil of guilt to torment our conſciences, and the evil of puniſhment beyond the grave, where ſoul and body were to receive the wages of ſin. From theſe evils the Lord Jeſus came into the world to ſave his people. And he took our nature that in it he might bear our griefs and carry our ſorrows. The holy law of God accuſed us of tranſgreſſion, and he came to anſwer the demands of the law, which he did by paying it a full and perfect obedience, and this obedience, being the act of a divine and infinite perſon, had therefore a divine and infinite merit to atone and ſatisfy for ſin. For tranſgreſſing the holy law of God we were liable to ſuffer the threatened pains and penalties, Chriſt in our nature ſuffered them for us, taking our ſins upon him, and bearing the griefs and ſorrows and death due to them; for the ſcripture declares, that he was made ſin for us who knew no ſin, and that he bare our ſins in his own body upon the tree, and that by his ſtripes we are healed. And he demonſtrated that theſe ſufferings were infinitely meritorious,

when he roſe from the dead for our juſtification. And thus by his active and paſſive obedience he wrought out an all-perfect righteouſneſs for us, and when the Holy Spirit enables us to lay hold of it by the hand of faith, then being thus applied and made ours, we are not only freed from condemnation and redeemed from the curſe of the broken law, and from all the pains and penalties due to the breach of it, but do alſo receive a right and title to the preſent graces, and to the eternal bleſſings purchaſed for us by the obedience and ſufferings of our moſt bleſſed Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.

Now let us examine how the forementioned inſtinct operates in the preſent caſe. We all love pleaſure, and hate pain. This is an univerſal principle in human nature. And here is a Saviour who promiſes to deliver us from the preſent and eternal pains to which ſin had ſubjected us, and to give us of his ſpiritual and heavenly pleaſures here in time and in eternity. He is able to fulfil his promiſe, for he is the Almighty God. He is willing: for as his power is, ſo is his love; both are alike infinite. And indeed he is daily fulfilling his promiſe unto all true believers. But are all men ſeeking freedom from pain and enjoyment of pleaſure at his hands? Do their deſires, their affections move to him, with the ſame natural inſtinct with which they would fly from ſickneſs and purſue health?

health? Let matter of fact ſpeak. How are men found to act with reſpect to Jeſus Chriſt, who has preſent ſalvation to give them from ſin and its effects in his kingdom of grace, and the pleaſures of eternal ſalvation to beſtow in his kingdom of glory? Alas! he is deſpiſed and rejected of men; although he became a man of ſorrows on purpoſe to carry our ſorrows, and acquainted with grief, that he might bear our griefs, yet they hide as it were their faces from him. The haters of pain chooſe ſin with all its miſeries, rather than accept of the great ſalvation of our God, and the lovers of pleaſure prefer the empty periſhing joys of ſenſe to the ſolid and everlaſting joys of his heaven. In what relates to the ſoul they act againſt that very inſtinct, by which they are invariably guided in what relates to the body. What can be the reaſon, that the ſame men ſhould act ſo inconſiſtently in a caſe ſo exactly parallel? Sin is the true cauſe. Sin has deſtroyed the uſe of the intellectual faculties in all ſpiritual matters, and by cutting off all communion with God who is the fountain of ſpiritual life, has left the ſoul in a ſtate of death, even dead in treſpaſſes and ſins. The ſoul of every natural man is repreſented in ſcripture to be as dead to all motions of grace, as dead to God and to the things of God, as a lifeleſs corpſe is to the things of this world. Talk to it of its wants, it feels them not. Recommend

mend to it the Redeemer's ſweet graces and divine excellencies, it has no deſire to find an intereſt in them: becauſe it feels not its wants of them. To perſons in this ſtate Jeſus Chriſt cannot appear lovely. Notwithſtanding all that he has done and ſuffered to endear himſelf to ſinners, yet while they ſee an engaging form and comelineſs in ſin, they can ſee no form or comelineſs in the Saviour that they ſhould deſire him.

But when one of theſe perſons is awakened from the dead ſleep of ſin, when his eyes are opened to ſee himſelf, when he has a clear view given him of his ſinful heart and of his wicked life, and the Spirit of God ſets home the conviction of ſin upon his conſcience, and makes him ſenſible of his guilt and of his danger, then he will find his want of a Saviour, and will ſee a peculiar ſuitableneſs and fitneſs in Jeſus Chriſt to ſupply all his wants. He has every office, and every qualification that an awakened ſinner could wiſh. He is juſt ſuch a Saviour as his heart could deſire; and when he begins to ſee Chriſt in this light, then he will begin to appear lovely in his eyes. And when out of the riches of his grace he begins to ſupply the ſinners' wants, then he will become more lovely: for the more any man knows of Chriſt, the more he will love him. But when the pardoned ſinner taſtes the ſweetneſs of redeeming love, and finds

joy and peace ſhed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit, when he can ſay Jeſus Chriſt loved me and gave himſelf for me, then the beloved Saviour appears altogether lovely, becauſe he ſees his intereſt in the obedience and ſufferings of the God-man. He can take up the words of the text, and ſpeak them upon his own experience, which leads me

Secondly, To conſider the believer's knowledge of his intereſt in Chriſt, before he could ſay, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend." Here he applies to himſelf what Chriſt had done for ſinners, as the ground of his love and friendſhip to him. He had been made to ſee his wants. The ſoul being awakened had found the burden of ſin intolerable, and had gone weary and heavy laden to Jeſus Chriſt, and he had given it reſt. The ſoul being convinced of ſin, felt the torments of a guilty conſcience, which nothing could quiet and comfort, but the atoning blood of the lamb of God; and when this was ſprinkled upon the conſcience, it felt the ſovereign healing virtue: for the blood of Jeſus quenched the hell within, and brought down heaven into the ſoul. The Holy Spirit bore his inward witneſs, that this was the work of God; and he continued the heavenly joy of his firſt teſtimony, by enabling the believer to ſhew the reality of the inward work by the outward evidence of his life and converſation, by bringing forth

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the rich and ripe fruits of the Spirit to the glory of God. And thus he had good evidence of his being intereſted in the obedience and atonement, in the righteouſneſs and ſanctifying grace of Jeſus Chriſt, and lived in ſure and certain hope of inheriting through him immortality and endleſs glory.

The ſinner muſt experience theſe things before he can ſay of the Redeemer, "This is my "beloved and my friend." He muſt find in himſelf theſe proofs of Chriſt's love and friendſhip, which he was to ſhew to ſinners. He had wiſdom and pardon, righteouſneſs and holineſs, and eternal redemption to give them; but my gratitude and love cannot ariſe from his having them to give to ſinners in general, but to me in particular. I muſt have reaſon to call them mine, he muſt enable me to apply and to appropriate them to myſelf, before I can ſee his lovelineſs in giving them; becauſe it is not what he does to others, but what he does to my ſoul, that makes him my beloved, and my friend. And hence came the wiſe remark, which was ſo often made by our firſt reformers, "That an un-"applied Chriſt is no Chriſt." All that he has done and ſuffered for ſinners muſt be applied to me, before I can call him mine. He is the wiſdom and the light of his people, but how can he appear to me altogether lovely in this character, if I am ſtill in ignorance and darkneſs? How

can I love him for being made unto me wiſdom, until he has enlightened me with ſaving truth? He has pardon to give to the greateſt ſinners, but if it be never made out to me, I can have none of the comforts of it; and how then can I love him for being the pardoner of ſin, "unleſs "I feel my conſcience at peace with God, "through the remiſſion of my ſin," as our church expreſſes it in the third part of the homily for Rogation Week? He has the robe of perfect righteouſneſs to beſtow, but if I know nothing of my being cloathed with it, the law will ſtill condemn, and my conſcience will be full of guilt and horror; and how then is it poſſible for me to love him for being the righteouſneſs of the ſaints, if I never find joy and peace in believing that his righteouſneſs is imputed unto me for my juſtification? He is the believer's holineſs and ſanctification, but how is he mine, while I find myſelf enſlaved to ſin, and kept under its dominion? How can I love Chriſt for being the ſanctification of his people, while I am under the abſolute power of ſin? Chriſt is alſo made unto the believer redemption, but if I know nothing of my having received redemption through his blood, even the forgiveneſs of ſins, how can I lift up my head with joy, when the almighty Judge is coming in the clouds, as knowing that my redemption then draweth nigh? In like manner all Chriſt's gifts and graces are matter of

joy

joy to the pardoned ſinner, ſo far as he receives them, and knows by faith his intereſt in them; without this knowledge, of what benefit can they be, or what comfort can they adminiſter to any perſon? For if you be ſick, and have an excellent remedy that would cure you, yet it can do you no ſervice, unleſs you take it. Suppoſe you are periſhing of hunger and thirſt, ſetting meat and drink before you will not ſave your life, unleſs you uſe them. If you are naked and like to be frozen to death, will thoſe cloaths warm you and ſave your life, which you never put on? So Chriſt is the medicine of the ſin-ſick ſoul, but if Chriſt's virtue be not applied to heal, if the medicine be not taken, how can it work a cure? So he is the bread of life, but unleſs he be taken, and verily and indeed received as ſpiritual food, how can he ſupport the life of God in the ſoul of man? So Chriſt is the cloathing of his people, but how can he be their cloathing, if they never put him on? How can they appear before God in ſpotleſs purity, if they have never put on Chriſt Jeſus the Lord? Surely then there is great judgment in that wiſe ſaying, which our reformers had ſo often in their mouths, "An unapplied Chriſt is no Chriſt"—he is no Chriſt to that ſinner to whom he is not applied, and therefore he is not his beloved nor his friend.

From hence appears the manner and kind of knowledge on which the believer grounded the words of the text. He was able to apply to himſelf all that Chriſt had done and ſuffered for ſinners. He knew it experimentally. He had the comforts of it in his own heart, and ſeeing clearly his intereſt in Chriſt, he therefore ſaw him altogether lovely.

But perhaps ſome one may aſk, Can I apply the merits of Chriſt's obedience and ſufferings ſo clearly and ſafely to myſelf, that I may be ſure I am not deluded? This is a very important enquiry, which I ſhall purſue, under my third head, wherein I was to conſider what certainty I can have of Chriſt's being my beloved and my friend. The ſcripture promiſes us full and complete evidence, and it is the office of faith to enable us to reſt upon it. Our certainty ariſes from our faith, and from what faith ſhews us of our own particular intereſt in God's promiſes. The word of promiſe and the Holy Spirit applying the word muſt go together: for the word is but a dead letter, unleſs the Holy Spirit animate and quicken it, by working faith in the heart to apply it ſavingly. Faith is a divine grace given us by the Spirit of God on purpoſe to convince us of our intereſt in Jeſus Chriſt, and to enable us to apply the promiſes to ourſelves: for it is expreſsly ſaid to be "the gift of God"—

and

and to be wrought in us by "the operation of "God"—By his almighty operation he works in my heart a clear conviction of my being accepted at the bar of juſtice, as juſt and righteous, through the righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt. When the Holy Spirit has given the believer this clear conviction, then he has divine authority both from the word of truth and the ſpirit of power, to call the Saviour his beloved and his friend. The Holy Spirit muſt enable him to do this: "for no man can ſay that Jeſus is the Lord "but by the Holy Ghoſt;" and therefore without the Holy Ghoſt how can any man ſay, that Jeſus is my Lord? Indeed he will be ſo far from ſaying it, that he will queſtion whether it can be ſaid with certainty. The natural man who has not the divine grace of faith is always reaſoning againſt it, and concludes with himſelf that it is altogether preſumption. He cannot ſee, how it works full aſſurance in the mind: And how ſhould he? As he is a ſtranger to the thing, how ſhould he judge of the nature of the evidence which it gives? He is a more improper judge, than a blind man is of colours: for until he receive faith from God as his gift, and by the operation of God as the work of his Spirit, he can form no idea of the nature of the certainty, which it produces in the mind. The ſcripture teaches him, that faith is the evidence of things not ſeen, even ſuch evidence as gives

them

them a preſent ſubſtance and reality; ſo that the whole man, and every faculty of ſoul and body reſt upon the certainty of them with full aſſurance, and direct every word and work towards the attainment of them: but the natural man receiveth not theſe things. How the eye of faith ſhould be open to ſee what is to the natural man inviſible, ſeems to him a great myſtery. And ſo it will be, until God open his eyes. He only can do it: yea, he only can convince him that he is now blind. Oh that the enlightening Spirit may open the eyes of every perſon here preſent who has no certainty of his intereſt in Chriſt, that he may not only be convinced ſuch a thing is to be attained, but may alſo be led to ſeek, until he find all the comforts of it, which comforts I propoſed in the fourth place to conſider.

The comforts which I hear ſpeak of are realities—promiſed in God's infallible word—beſtowed by his Spirit—and received by faith. They no more depend upon fancy and imagination, than the objects do which we ſee with our eyes and handle with our hands. The ſoul has as true a perception of them, as the bodily ſenſes can have of any ſolid ſubſtance. And you may as well ſay, we are deluded at our common meals when we are eating or drinking, or when we are hearing a fine piece of muſic, as ſuppoſe righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt

Ghoſt to be a deluſion. Thank God the believer knows, and is happy in knowing the reality of thoſe things. When he can ſay with the apoſtle, Jeſus Chriſt loved me, and gave himſelf for me —And with the faithful in the text—He is my beloved, and he is my friend, then he has the preſent poſſeſſion of the graces and bleſſings purchaſed by the Redeemer's obedience and ſufferings, and the eternal poſſeſſion is ſecured to him under the ſeal of two infallible witneſſes, viz. the word and the Spirit of God. The comforts, which he enjoys in this ſtate, can no more be deſcribed than the joys of heaven. He has a love which paſſeth knowledge, a peace which ſurpaſſeth all underſtanding, a joy which is unſpeakable and full of glory. In one word—the Comforter is his. The eternal Spirit, whoſe name, whoſe office, whoſe glory it is to be the comforter of God's people, is his. He is the applier of all comfort, and he dwells in the heart to apply it; what comfort then can be wanting? He is the ſinner's comforter: for he comes to give him faith, and to aſſure him of his pardon and acceptance. He is the believer's comforter in all times and ſtates, ſtrengthening and eſtabliſhing him, ſhedding abroad in his heart that love, which makes proſperity ſafe, and adverſity ſweet, and which renders even the way of the commandments delightful And this divine comforter is the deareſt pledge of our Lord's

love;

love; "for he ſhall take of mine, ſays the bleſſed "Jeſus, and ſhall ſhew it unto you," even to all his diſciples and followers to the end of the world. He ſhall take of my graces and bleſſings, and ſhall ſhew them unto you, ſhall manifeſt them and your intereſt in them to your hearts. I will ſend him for this purpoſe. In this one gift, he ſent you all; becauſe he ſent you that Spirit who lets you know your intereſt in all: knowing this you are happy, yea happier than tongue of men or angels can deſcribe. Your loftieſt deſcriptions fall ſhort of the happineſs which the Lord Jeſus gives by his Spirit in the preſent life: and they who taſte of it, find that he is altogether lovely, and are aſſured that he is their beloved and their friend. May the God of all mercy and conſolation aſſure every one of you of your intereſt in the Redeemer's friendſhip, that you may receive many happy proofs of it in time, and in eternity.

And now let us look into ourſelves, and apply what has been ſaid to our own hearts. You have heard what the Lord Jeſus did and ſuffered to make himſelf the beloved and the friend of all believers, and what knowledge he gives them of their intereſt in his obedience and ſufferings, nay what certainty they have by faith of their intereſt in him, from whence flows a continual ſource of pure and ſpiritual comfort. Since theſe things are ſo, the matter is now brought

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to a point, and that is; can you, my brethren, take up the words of the text, and upon the clear evidence of your own experience declare, Jeſus Chriſt is my beloved and my friend—He is mine, and I am his—His good Spirit bears teſtimony of it in my heart—The word of God bears teſtimony of it in my life: for I am become a new creature, and live a new life in Chriſt Jeſus. If you can ſay this with truth, then you are happy. But if you cannot, you want the true foundation of goſpel comfort, which is laid in Chriſt Jeſus, and in the evidence I have of my intereſt in him.

But perhaps ſome of you may think, that there is no knowing for certain, and others may think it preſumption for a man to declare, that he knows ſo much of the ſtate of his ſoul, as to be certain that Chriſt is his beloved and his friend. Hear what the ſcripture ſays: "Jeſus Chriſt," ſays the bleſſed apoſtle Paul, "loved me, and "gave himſelf for me." Certainly this was not preſumption in Paul, nor yet in the beloved John, when he ſaid—"The Son of God hath "given us an underſtanding, that we may know "him that is true, and we are in him that is "true, even in his Son Jeſus Chriſt." He did not think it any preſumption to declare that he was in Chriſt, rooted and built up in him.

But theſe apoſtles, ſome will ſay, were inſpired: they knew this by inſpiration, but is it the

the common privilege of all believers to know it? It is. Every true believer knows that Chriſt Jeſus is his Saviour and his God. Faith manifeſts it to him; and faith is wrought in him by the operation of the Holy Spirit for this very purpoſe. So ſays our church in the third part of the homily of ſalvation, "The true faith is a ſure "truſt and confidence in God that by the merits "of Chriſt my ſins be forgiven, and I am recon-"ciled to the favour of God and am partaker "of the kingdom of heaven by Chriſt." And in the third part of the homily for Rogation week our church ſays, "that a man may feel his con-"ſcience at peace with God through remiſſion "of his ſin." So ſay the living members of our church. They can uſe her words without preſumption, and declare, that they have a ſure truſt and confidence in God that by the merits of Chriſt their ſins are forgiven, and they are reconciled to the favour of God, and are partakers of the kingdom of heaven by Chriſt, and that they feel their conſcience at peace with God through remiſſion of their ſin. What can you object to theſe authorities? The liturgy will not ſuffer any member of our church to make the leaſt objection: for in the prayer after the communion ſervice, we are taught, "That "God does aſſure them, who have duly received "theſe holy myſteries, of his favour and good-"neſs towards them; nay more, aſſures them

"that

" that they are very members incorporate into " the myſtical body of his Son, and alſo aſſures " them that they are heirs through the hope of " his everlaſting kingdom." Here our church plainly teaches, that a believer may know Chriſt to be his beloved and his friend: for he may have aſſurance of God's favour and goodneſs towards him, the aſſurance of his being united to Chriſt, and incorporated into his myſtical body, and the aſſurance of his being an heir of Chriſt's everlaſting kingdom. The warmeſt contenders for the aſſurance of faith could not have expreſſed their opinion in ſtronger terms, than our church uſes in this prayer. And now, my brethren of the church of England, what do you think of theſe authorities? Are they not clear and deciſive? And will you not be determined by them? Here you have the word of God, and the Spirit of God, and the people of God with one voice declaring, that a man not only may know, but that it is the very office and work of ſaving faith to let him know, and to aſſure him of, the favour and goodneſs of God towards him, and that he is a member of Chriſt, and an heir of glory. Do not then, my brethren, deny a fact ſo well atteſted. Your denial of it will only prove your want of true ſaving faith. And it is a very ſtrong proof to others, would to God you ſaw your want of it yourſelves. At preſent you diſpute againſt the certainty which faith gives,

becauſe

becauſe you have not received it, nor have any deſire for it. Is not this the caſe? This ſhews your want of that faith, which is the operation of God. When faith is the work of his grace, it brings abſolute certainty. According to the apoſtle it gives ſubſtance to the things hoped for, and evidence to the things not ſeen. If you have not this kind of faith, don't diſpute againſt it, leſt you ſhould be found diſputing againſt God. Rather beg of God to give it you. Aſk him, if it be the privilege of believers to know Jeſus Chriſt to be your beloved and your friend, to give you this knowledge. Aſk it for the ſake of your preſent and eternal peace. If you deſire a calm ſerene conſcience, free from the guilt of ſin, and ſaved from the power and dominion of it, beg you may know your intereſt in the Lord Jeſus: for until you know it, you cannot live upon the promiſes nor enjoy the comforts of the goſpel. You cannot live upon the promiſes but by faith, by that faith which makes the things hoped for ſubſtantially preſent, and realizes the things not ſeen, and thus enjoys the comforts of the goſpel. But as you have not this faith you live without Chriſt in the world, and if you ſhould come to die without any hope in him, Oh think what your condition would then be. All your ſins would ſtand unatoned againſt you. Conſcience would accuſe. The broken law would condemn you. Juſtice muſt

give

give you your due; and what? but the wages of ſin, even eternal deſtruction of ſoul and body. Are not theſe very intereſting and alarming conſiderations? I pray God to give them their proper weight and influence upon your minds. May he convince you of your want of faith, and ſtir you up to ſeek it as the free gift, and as the work and operation of the almighty Spirit. Thus ſeek and you ſhall find. Continue ſeeking with humility in the ways of the ordinances, and you will be brought to the knowledge of a loving Saviour, who will give you many reaſons to call him your beloved and your friend.

If then you are convinced of ſin, and ſee your guilt and your danger, what ſhould hinder you from accepting the bleſſings of Chriſt's love? Is it the ſenſe of your unworthineſs? He is the Saviour of the unworthy. Are you afraid he will not receive you, becauſe you are great ſinners? He came to ſave the greateſt. But you have been high and long in rebellion againſt him. Then you ſtand in greater need of pardon. Make more haſte to obtain it, and apply more earneſtly for it. But you find ſo much weakneſs and backwardneſs in yourſelf that you are at a loſs how to take one ſtep: this is another motive for applying to him. Read for your encouragement that ſweet ſcripture, "The ſon of man is "come to ſeek and to ſave that which was loſt."

Go then to him ſuch as you are, go as poor loſt ſinners, for ſuch he came to ſeek and to ſave. He is the beloved Saviour and friend of ſinners. His love to them brought him down from heaven ---carried him through a blaſpheming perſecuting world---nailed him to the croſs, and laid him in the grave. Can he want love for ſinners, who did ſo much, who bled to death for them? What can he with-hold from them, who is now their advocate, pleading their cauſe, and interceding for them at the bar of juſtice? Oh ſinner, conſider what a bleſſing it is to have an advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous, who is willing and able to ſupply all thy wants. Make them known to him. Open thy heart before him, and acknowledge thy great and numerous ſins. Confeſs them, and they will be no bar to his love and friendſhip. He will do honour to his free grace by making thee out a full pardon. The Holy Spirit will be ſent to bear his teſtimony of it in thy heart, he will give thee love and joy in believing, he will cloath thee with the perfect righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt, he will enrich thy juſtified ſoul with his ſanctifying graces, mortifying ſin in thee, and making thee alive to God; and he will make thee happy in having the moſt high God and Saviour for thy beloved and thy friend here in time and in eternity.

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All this, and more than this, the Lord Jesus will do for every unpardoned sinner, who will apply to him. No tongue can relate the greatness and number of the graces and blessings which he has to give to sinners. Faith has a present taste of them, and hope now enjoys them, and though imperfectly, yet no description can come up to what the believer feels; and who then is able to describe, how great they will be when faith and hope shall cease, and the soul shall be filled with the love of God. Oh what happiness, what a heaven will it be to see our Saviour in the brightness of divine glory! To behold him face to face--and then to be able to say of him, whom all the host of heaven worship, of the eternal and almighty God whom all the redeemed adore---this is my beloved, and this is my friend; that will be joy unspeakable. Oh how lovely, how altogether lovely will this blessed God then appear in the eyes of sinners, when his love and friendship shall have brought them safe to the enjoyment of his eternal glory! How will they then admire and praise the wonders of his redeeming love! What subject of joy, and gratitude, and thanks will their consideration of his free grace afford them, which raised them from the lowest state of wretchedness to the highest happiness of his heaven. Certainly their blessedness surpasseth all understanding. No tongue can utter, or heart conceive, how

great it is. And yet, ſinner, all this may be thine. The Lord Jeſus promiſes it freely. Come then and accept of it. Unleſs thou thinkeſt thy ſins can make thee happier than God can, return to them no more. Now cloſe in with the invitation that is made thee. Take Jeſus for thy God. Go this day, this hour to the throne of his grace. Commit thyſelf into his hands, ſinful as thou art, and he will ſend his good Spirit into thy heart, to give thee preſent comforts of ſalvation, and to prepare thee for the eternal ſalvation of thy Lord and thy God.

And now what wait we for, O thou moſt bleſſed God and moſt loving Saviour, but that we may all experience the truth of this ſcripture. Write it Lord Jeſus in all our hearts. Send us away with warm impreſſions of it upon our minds. Oh that every ſoul here preſent had reaſon to ſay, Yea, he is altogether lovely—Whatever is lovely in heaven and earth meets in the incarnate God, and this incarnate God is my beloved and this is my friend. May the grace of the Eternal Three, of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, manifeſt to your ſouls the perfect lovelineſs of Jeſus Chriſt, and keep him your beloved and your friend in time, until you ſee him face to face in his eternal glory. *Amen* and *Amen.*

SERMON IX.

CHAP. VI. VER. I.

Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou faireſt among women, whither is thy beloved turned aſide, that we may ſeek him with thee.

IN the beginning of the 5th chapter we find the believer fallen into a ſpiritual ſlumber. After much ſweet communion with Chriſt, and long walking in the light of his countenance, he grew negligent. While the bridegroom tarried he ſlumbered and ſlept. He left off ſtirring up the gift of God that was in him, and ceaſed to be watchful and to ſtrengthen the things which remain. And thus he forgot the rule laid down for the conduct of believers---" Let us not ſleep, " as others do, but let us watch and be ſober."

Chriſt is repreſented as coming to the ſoul ſleeping in this ſecurity, but it was not a total, univerſal ſleep, like the dead ſleep of ſin: for he found the heart awake, and capable of diſtinguiſhing it to be his voice, that knocked at the door of the heart for admittance and ſaid, " Open to me, my ſiſter, my love, my dove, my " undefiled, for I have been waiting till my " head is filled with dew, and my locks with

" the drops of the night." The ſoul, willing to enjoy its indolent ſlumber, excuſes itſelf from riſing to let him in. Upon which he withdrew himſelf, and hid his face. He took away the ſenſible feeling of his comforts, but at the ſame time left ſomething in the heart, which made it ſenſible of its paſt unkindneſs, and put it upon endeavouring earneſtly to recover its former communion and ſweet fellowſhip with Chriſt. The ſoul is reſtleſs until they be recovered,—goes out to ſeek for Chriſt, but cannot find him—calls, but he gives no anſwer—meets with reproach and perſecution in the ſearch, and yet gives it not over—turns to the daughters of Jeruſalem, the outward members of the church, and charges them if they found her beloved to tell him, that ſhe was ſick of love; ſhe had enjoyed the ſweetneſs of his preſence, and now ſo diſtinctly diſcerned his abſence, as to be ſick and in pain for the return of his love. Inſtead of anſwering directly, they enquire, "What is thy "beloved more than another beloved, O thou "faireſt among women, what is thy beloved "more than another beloved, that thou ſo charg-"eſt us." This queſtion gave occaſion to the believer to deſcribe his beloved. He draws a character of Chriſt, and paints his excellencies under the moſt ſublime images nature could afford; but finds all too mean to expreſs Chriſt's worth, and his value for it. He therefore ſums

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it up in theſe words---" Yea, he is altogether " lovely---This is my beloved, and this is my " friend, O daughters of Jeruſalem."---Although he has withdrawn himſelf, yet ſtill he is altogether lovely in my eyes: for I know that I am intereſted in him, and this gives a new grace to his every excellency. Still he is my beloved and I am his, ſtill he is my friend and I am his. Although he has for a time hid his face from me, yet I believe that ere long I ſhall again walk in the light of his countenance. This enlivened deſcription of Chriſt fired the daughters of Jeruſalem. They now ſaw there was ſomething more in this beloved, than in another beloved. And they had good deſires ſtirred up in their hearts, earneſt and fervent deſires, to ſhare in his love, and to partake of his graces and bleſſings: for thus they now reply, in a very different temper to what they ſhewed before---" Whi- " ther is thy beloved gone, O thou faireſt among " women, whither is thy beloved turned aſide, " that we may ſeek him with thee." May the Holy Spirit by his gracious influence diſpoſe every one of us to ſeek, as they did, until we find, an intereſt in the bleſſed Jeſus. And to this end may he accompany with his grace and bleſſing what ſhall now be offered,

Firſt, Concerning the character of the perſons who ſpeak the words of the text.

Secondly, Concerning the ſubject-matter of their ſpeech. And

Thirdly, Concerning the uſe we are to make of it.

And Firſt, The perſons who ſpeak in the text are called "the daughters of Jeruſalem." Jeruſalem is the church. The ſcripture applies the word, both to the congregation of the faithful here below, and alſo to the heavenly Jeruſalem that is above. The daughters of the church are its members, who were bred and educated in it. They lived in her communion, and partook of her ordinances. And yet they ſeem to have had no experience of that ſweet and ſpiritual union which the believer enjoyed with his beloved Saviour: for they enquire what he ſaw in Chriſt more than in any other beloved, and being made acquainted with his graces and excellencies, then they deſire to ſeek him along with the believer. Theſe circumſtances plainly prove that they were not intimately and vitally united to Chriſt by faith. They were not joined to him as the head of the myſtical body, nor as his living members were they drawing nouriſhment and ſtrength from him for the ſupport and carrying on of their ſpiritual life. They were not as living branches grafted into the true vine, and bearing much fruit by their union with him; but they contented themſelves with living within the

the pale of the viſible church, and thought themſelves ſafe and happy in church memberſhip. They were the children of Abraham, admitted into the covenant on the eighth day, lived among God's choſen people, who had the law and promiſes, and they were ſtrict in the obſervance of the inſtituted rites and ceremonies. Eaſy and ſecure in this ſtate, none of them enquired—All theſe have I kept, what lack I yet? One thing thou lackeſt—ſpiritual communion with Chriſt, without which church privileges and outward ordinances do not anſwer the end of their appointment. It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the fleſh profiteth nothing. The fleſh, the outward ſervice, profiteth nothing, unleſs the quickening Spirit go along with it. And the quickening Spirit has not gone along with it, until he has begun to draw the ſoul to Chriſt, and to unite it to him by faith.

If we look among the members of our church, we ſhall find too many followers of theſe daughters of Jeruſalem. We have ſome, who becauſe they live in the communion of a ſound apoſtolic church, therefore think themſelves ſafe, while their lives give open ſcandal and offence to all good men. Their opinion about good mother church is very much like the opinion of the Papiſts, who think the living in the church can ſave them, although they live in their ſins. And we have others, who make the greateſt boaſt of

their love to our church, and ſpeak of her in the higheſt terms, who are only outward members of her communion. They will contend with all their might for the purity of her rites and ceremonies, and will draw their ſwords to defend the divine inſtitution of epiſcopacy, and to cut off from all communion with Chriſt thoſe vile ſchiſmatics who will not live in the communion of the church of England; while they have not a word to ſay for the neceſſity of being united to the head of the catholic church, and of being joined to him by living faith. Nay, perhaps, when they hear, that unleſs the Holy Spirit be the bond on Chriſt's part uniting him to the believer, and faith on his part uniting him to Chriſt, it will be of very little conſequence in what outward communion a man lives; when they hear this, it is too hard a ſaying, they cannot bear it. They think, that a ſound church with a good liturgy, ſcripture articles and homilies, and a regular diſcipline, are the main things. Doubtleſs they are good things. God forbid our church ſhould be without them, and God forbid any member of our church ſhould reſt in them: for in this communion, excellent as it is, a man believing it to be excellent may yet live without the grace of Chriſt, and periſh from glory for ever. The church is not a Saviour. We Proteſtants have one Saviour, even Chriſt Jeſus our Lord. The Papiſts indeed make a Saviour of

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the church, and a far greater Saviour than Chriſt: for the holy mother church can ſave a man who dies in his ſins unrepented of, which Chriſt has no where in ſcripture promiſed to do. And our high churchmen in the heat of their party zeal ſpeak and act in the very ſpirit of Popery. By laying ſo much ſtreſs, nay laying all the ſtreſs, as ſome of them do, upon outward communion, they omit the weightier matter of inward communion with the head of the church, without which, of whatever reformed church or Proteſtant congregation a man be a member, he is no member of the true church of Chriſt. He has not the ſpirit of Chriſt uniting him to the head of the myſtical body, and without the ſpirit of Chriſt he is none of his. Reſt not then, I beſeech you my brethren, in outward membership to this or that communion. Don't place your religion in externals. You may live in the beſt communion upon earth, and ſuch indeed I take the church of England to be, and yet you may be out of Chriſt's kingdom. Outward things of themſelves will not avail: for the kingdom of God does not conſiſt in meat and drink, or in any thing external, but in righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt. His kingdom is a ſpiritual thing. It is formed within us, in the heart. There Chriſt muſt rule and govern. Seek then to have his kingdom ſet up within you by an inward work of his grace. Beg

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of God to ſhew you your want of it, and when it ſhall pleaſe him to convince you, that no outward things can avail, not even his own inſtitutions, unleſs his quickening Spirit be in them, then he will bring you into a proper frame and temper of mind to join with the daughters of Jeruſalem in the text in ſeeking the knowledge of your intereſt in Chriſt, which is the ſecond particular to be conſidered.

The believer had deſcribed the excellencies and perfections of his beloved Jeſus, and had ſpoken feelingly of his own intereſt in them. The deſcription ſtirred up the daughters of Jeruſalem, who wondered at firſt what he ſaw in his Jeſus to be ſo enamoured with him, to deſire that they might have the ſame happy experience. And they, who could enquire before what there was in him, more than in another beloved, now aſk, "Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou "faireſt among women?" Chriſt had before called her the faireſt among women. She had no beauty in herſelf—defiled and deformed with natural and actual guilt, ſhe was caſt out to the loathing of her perſon. He that is of purer eyes than to behold the leaſt iniquity, could not ſee any thing in her but uglineſs and ſinful deformity; and yet the love of the Lord Jeſus has cleanſed her from every ſpot and ſtain of ſin. In the 16th chapter of Ezekiel, we have a ſweet deſcription of his free grace and love. "When

"I paſſed

" I paſſed by thee," ſays he, " and ſaw thee, " polluted in thine own blood, I ſaid unto thee " when thou waſt in thy blood, Live; yea I " ſaid unto thee when thou waſt in thy blood, " Live."---And after deſcribing the ſeveral ſteps which he took to raiſe her up, to ornament her, and to ennoble her, he adds---" Thy renown " went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: " for it was perfect through my comelineſs, " which I had put upon thee, ſaith the Lord " God." He cloathed her with the unſpotted robe of his own righteouſneſs, and made her perfect through his comelineſs which he put upon her. All our comelineſs now conſiſts in what Chriſt puts upon us, and in what he works in us. While man was innocent he wanted no cloathing; but when he loſt the image of God, then ſhame and ſin made cloathing neceſſary. The ſinful body is forced to go to the creatures to borrow a covering from them, and the ſoul has no covering but what comes from the head of the church. The moon has no light but what ſhe receives from the ſun. The ſpouſe of Chriſt ſhines in the beams of her huſband. Covered and ornamented with his righteouſneſs, and enriched with the graces of his Spirit, ſhe is the faireſt among women, fair in the ſight of an infinitely holy God, in the eye of the perfect law ſhe appears to be without ſpot or wrinkle or any ſuch thing, holy and without blemiſh. In this amiable

able light ſhe now appears to the daughters of Jeruſalem. They ſee and acknowledge her perfect beauty, and earneſtly deſire to partake of her Lord's love. Whither, ſay they, is thy beloved, whoſe love was able to cloath thee with this immaculate robe of righteouſneſs, and whoſe ſpirit has enriched thee with ſo many divine graces, whither is he gone? They knew he had withdrawn himſelf from the believer, but it is plain, from this queſtion, that they did not think Chriſt had quite forſaken him; they ſuppoſed he ſtill knew Chriſt, and was able to inform them whither he was gone. The words immediately following the text ſhew, that he was acquainted where Chriſt then vouchſafed his preſence, though he had hid his face from him---"My beloved," ſays he, "is gone down "into his garden."---He is ſtill in the garden of his church. There he was to be found. He was ſtill preſent by his Spirit in the ordinances, and in them he was determined to wait until he found his beloved. Chriſt had taken away the light of his countenance, not only to chaſtiſe his former ſleepy ſecurity, and to make him more earneſt in ſeeking his Lord, and to make him more thankful when he ſhould find him, but alſo to render him the means as it here proved, of ſtirring up others to ſeek for a clear knowledge of Chriſt, and the experience of his love---"Whi-"ther is thy beloved gone," ſay they, "whither

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" is thy beloved turned aſide?"---not wholly departed, but only turned aſide, tell us, " that we " may ſeek him with thee." How wonderfully does grace appear to work by the growth of theſe good deſires in the daughters of Jeruſalem! And how ready ſhould we be to ſpeak a word for Chriſt, ſince ſuch may be the happy effects? How induſtrious ought we to be to ſeek occaſions, how careful to neglect none? As we know not which word is to proſper, either this or that, let us take every opportunity of ſaying ſomething for Chriſt. Let us inform men what he is, and what we know of him, and who can tell but a very imperfect, yet well-meant deſcription may receive a bleſſing. Have we not great encouragement in the morning to ſow our ſeed, and in the evening not to with-hold our hand, from the ſucceſs mentioned in the text? When the daughters of Jeruſalem heard the believer enlarge upon the excellencies of Chriſt, and ſet forth his own ſhare and intereſt in them, and ſaw that no diſcouragements could cool the ardor of his love, they were hereby ſtirred up; theſe were the means under God of putting them upon deſiring a nearer and more cloſe acquaintance with Chriſt. They knew him before by profeſſion, but now they wanted the poſſeſſion of him. They wanted to know Chriſt to be theirs. At firſt they ſaw no form nor comelineſs in him, that they ſhould deſire him. But now

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the desires of their hearts are after him. They see their want of him, they are convinced of his all-sufficiency to supply their wants, they believe he is able, and they hope he is willing, they neither doubt of his power or of his love to save, and therefore they resolve to seek him, until they have experienced the truth of the character which they had heard of him, and can call him their beloved and their friend.

Considering the words in this light, they hold out to us one plain lesson. When the daughters of Jerusalem heard of the beauties and excellencies of God the Saviour, it wrought upon their hearts, and kindled fervent and earnest desires to know their interest in him. Still God works in the same manner. When Christ is set forth in his divine graces, and attributes, and offices, the Holy Spirit thereby stirs up desires in the hearts of sinners to seek Christ and his salvation, and he also excites holy affections in believers to follow Christ more closely. Has he, my brethren, wrought thus in any of your hearts? How have you been affected with these discourses upon the loveliness and perfections of Jesus Christ? Have they made any good impression upon you? Have you had stronger desires after Christ, and have you seen him more lovely than you ever did before? These effects ought to have followed: for his "name is as "ointment poured forth," the preaching of his name

name is like opening a box of the richeſt perfume. It diffuſes its fragrancy all around, ſo that the houſe is filled with the grateful odour of the ointment. Did you perceive none of it poured forth, none of this unction from the holy one deſcending upon you this day? Did you find no ſweet ſavour of grace working in your hearts, while I was attempting to draw a ſhort character of the lovelineſs of Jeſus? Did he appear to you altogether lovely, as man, as God, as God-man united in one Saviour, and was it the prayer of your ſoul, that you might find him your beloved and your friend! If the Holy Spirit accompanied the word, theſe effects have followed; if they have, give the glory to God, and be thankful; and if they have not, Oh that he may now enable me to ſpeak a word to your conſciences under my third and laſt head, which was to make a proper uſe and application of what has been ſaid.

The believer, though under ſpiritual deſertion, could ſee nothing worth ſeeking after, but his beloved Saviour. He ſeeks him, though he cannot find---calls, though he has no anſwer---continues ſeeking and calling, though he meets with diſgrace and perſecution. The pleaſing remembrance of their love would not ſuffer him to reſt until it was renewed. His love grew with ſeeking. Oppoſition made it burn the brighter. He went on, nothing diſcouraged, until he found

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the daughters of Jeruſalem, and made them acquainted with his caſe. They aſk, what he found in this Jeſus, that he was ſo diſtreſt at his withdrawing himſelf from him? this gave him occaſion to draw the character of his beloved, which he does in a very enlivened deſcription, ſetting forth in the moſt beautiful colours, what he was in himſelf, and what he was to him, the perfect lovelineſs of Chriſt, and his intereſt in it. Upon this the daughters of Jeruſalem take fire. They become alſo in love with Chriſt, and deſire to ſhare in thoſe perfections, the account of which had touched their hearts and inflamed their affection.

Now if the Spirit of God be moving in your hearts, this is, my brethren, the caſe with you. You are convinced of your own ſpiritual wants, and of Chriſt's being an all-ſufficient and a loving Saviour, and while I have been deſcribing him, you have ſent up many a wiſh to heaven, praying him to reveal himſelf to you, and to manifeſt his love to your ſoul. This is always the conſequence of preaching Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, when God effectually works with the word preached. When the Holy Spirit accompanies it with his divine grace, it is then the power of God unto ſalvation. But

If this has not been the effect, if you have had no deſires awakened in your minds after Chriſt, conſider, I beſeech you, what a ſtate of guilt and danger

danger you are in. Jeſus Chriſt has all the excellencies of heaven and earth, every thing that ought to gain your eſteem in his human nature, every thing that can demand your love in his divine nature, and as God-man united in one Saviour he has every grace and every bleſſing to give, that can make you happy in time and in eternity. And yet though he has every thing valuable, that can win the underſtanding, though he has every thing deſireable, that can gain the will, though he has every thing lovely, that can influence the heart and the affections, you can hear of him without any emotion. You ſee no form nor comelineſs in him that you ſhould deſire him. Without an intereſt in him you muſt be miſerable for ever. He alone can ſave you from the juſt puniſhment due to your ſins, and yet your hopes and fears, your own intereſt, your love of pleaſure and hatred of pain, cannot prevail with you to love and eſteem the God of our ſalvation. What is the reaſon of this? Why are all the faculties of the ſoul thus ſtrongly biaſſed againſt their own intereſt? Propoſe to them any ſenſual pleaſure, they eagerly deſire, and ardently purſue it, and with the ſame propenſity they fly from ſenſual pain. But in matters relating to the ſoul they act directly contrary. Jeſus Chriſt being the Saviour of the world has every ſpiritual pleaſure to give, and yet they neither eagerly

deſire, nor ardently purſue it. Without an intereſt in him body and ſoul will be in everlaſting pain, and yet they do not fly to him, that they may avoid it. Whence is it that men act thus abſurdly, thus unnaturally? The ſcripture gives this reaſon. Sin has corrupted all the faculties of ſoul and body, and has got dominion over them. It has blinded the underſtanding, which is dark, yea darkneſs itſelf the apoſtle ſays, not only without the actual knowledge of God and of the things of God, but alſo without the potential knowledge of them: "for the natural man perceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." From whence we learn his actual want of knowledge in the things of God. But leſt ſome ſhould aſcribe this to his neglect of them, or to his not being acquainted with metaphyſics or moral reaſoning, the apoſtle adds, "neither can he know them," let him ſtudy them ever ſo much; from hence we learn his want of power to know them, and this is the reaſon, "becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned." An evident proof, that the faculties of the natural man are as much under the power of ſin as a dead corpſe is under the power of death. In all ſpiritual matters he is like a dead man, without any ſpiritual diſcernment. He cannot turn his mind to think, his will to deſire, or his affections to love them. Sin has abſolute dominion over him, and forces him to ſerve it with all the

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powers of ſoul and body, even to their own deſtruction. In this ſtate, dreadful as it is, you are at preſent. If the deſires of your heart be not after Chriſt, if you do not at this time wiſh from your ſouls, that you may have an intereſt in the lovelineſs and excellencies of Chriſt, and may know him to be your Saviour and your God, then be aſſured that you are ſtill under the power of ſin. It has entirely blinded you, and I ſhould be an enemy to my bleſſed maſter, and an enemy to your happineſs, if I did not ſpeak to you freely and openly, and warn you of your danger. Out of love to your ſouls I cannot be ſilent, and whether you will hear or whether you will forbear, I muſt deliver my own ſoul.

I ſuppoſe, my brethren, you profeſs yourſelves chriſtians, and you believe that Jeſus Chriſt is a perfect and complete Saviour; and you believe farther, that you ſhall ſome time or other ſtand in need of his ſalvation; but you have no deſire to experience it at preſent. You do not want preſent ſalvation from ſin. You cannot but wiſh to be freed from the guilt and puniſhment of it, but then you have no wiſhes to be freed from its dominion; is it not evident therefore that it ſtill has dominion over you: and being ſo, you are children of God's wrath, under the curſes of his holy law, ſentenced by it and condemned to everlaſting torments, death will ſoon come, and inflict the curſes of the law upon you, even the

moſt terrible and dreadful of them. How awful and ſtriking are theſe words! Who but a man dead in ſin could ſtand out againſt the force of them? "If any man love not the Lord Jeſus "Chriſt let him be anathema maranatha." You are here put under the heavieſt and bittereſt of divine curſes, not only if you hate or oppoſe Jeſus Chriſt, but alſo if you do not love him. Oh conſider then and weigh this ſcripture carefully, if you have not ſome love for the Lord Jeſus, and are not ſeeking to love him more. I leave it upon your minds, and may God write it upon all your hearts, that you may fly from this anathema maranatha to the arms of that loving Saviour, who alone can deliver you from it. Flee then from ſin. Flee then from ſatan. Flee from all the enemies of your ſouls to this loving God, who is almighty to ſave. And to thoſe who are flying to him for ſalvation, and whoſe hearts have been ſtirred up to ſeek him along with theſe daughters of Jeruſalem, I make my ſecond practical remark.

My brethren, you have great reaſon to be thankful for theſe firſt motions of grace. God has begun to draw you to himſelf—follow and run after him. Seek him, while he may be found. And for your encouragement remember how many ſweet promiſes God has made in ſcripture to them that ſeek him. "Thoſe that "ſeek me early, ſays wiſdom, ſhall find me."

Prov. viii. 17. Chriſt, who has made unto us wiſdom, here declares that he will be found of them that ſeek him. And again he ſays, "Seek "and ye ſhall find; for every one that ſeeketh "findeth." Theſe are the words of the God of truth, and they ſhall ſtand faſt for ever and ever. His almighty power will againſt all oppoſition fulfil his promiſes. And his faithful people find them fulfilled. They have the comfortable experience of them. One of his people, a man after his own heart, has declared, "Thou Lord "haſt never failed them that ſeek thee."—No, never—at no time has he diſappointed them. If they ſought happineſs in him, they infallibly found it. And this is the experience of all God's people. They can take up the prophet's words, and with one voice declare. "Thou "Lord has never failed them that ſeek thee." Here is comfort for them that ſeek the Lord Jeſus. How happy would worldly men think themſelves, if they were upon this footing, if they were ſure of finding what they ſeek? Let them not riſe up in judgement againſt you, my brethren, and condemn you for not ſeeking what you could not but have found, if you had ſought aright: Chriſt is to be found in his own ordinances. He is to be met with, not in the wilderneſs of the world, but in the incloſed garden of the church. Thither he ſtill comes down, and manifeſts himſelf to them that ſeek him. In the

the aſſemblies of his people he will be made known by animating and quickening the word, and by rendering it effectual to awaken ſinners from the dead ſleep of ſin, to encourage ſeekers to go on until they find, and to build up and ſtrengthen them that have found. He will prove himſelf to be the God who heareth prayer, by hearing and anſwering their petitions for themſelves, and their ſupplications for all men. He will make himſelf known to them, by breaking of bread, and by feeding and ſtrengthening their ſouls with his body and blood at his own table. He ſtill comes down with his gracious preſence into theſe ordinances, and animates and enlivens them. We are his witneſſes: for we find his good Spirit in them. Oh continue then ſeeking, and continue in the ways of his own appointing, and when it will be moſt for his glory, and for your comfort and ſalvation, you have his word of promiſe "you ſhall find." And ſooner ſhall heaven and earth paſs away, than the leaſt tittle of any of his promiſes ſhall fail: "Seek "and ye ſhall find." And to them who have found I have a word of exhortation in the third and laſt place.

My chriſtian brethren, ſince you know Chriſt to be altogether lovely, and to be your beloved and your friend, pray daily for more and more of his love. Beſeech the Holy Spirit to ſhed it abroad abundantly in your hearts, that you may honour

honour him more in your lives, and praiſe him more with your lips. How meanly ſoever men may think of him, be not ye aſhamed to own what he has done for your ſouls. Publiſh his praiſes. Proclaim to all about you, what a loving Saviour you have found. If you, after what you have experienced, were ſilent, ſurely the very ſtones will cry out. Speak out then, and tell of his matchleſs excellencies, and infinite perfections, and try to ſtir up others to ſeek. Preſs them to leave ſin, and to come to him, for nothing but ſin can keep them from him. Perſuade them to leave the poor unſatisfying joys of ſin, and to ſeek his heavenly pleaſures. Among your acquaintance and friends, in your family, in all companies, ſpeak a word for your dear Saviour. He ſometimes bleſſes a well-meant ſpeech, if it be neither learned, nor elegant. But if it ſhould not be a bleſſing to others, yet it will certainly be one to yourſelf: for he hath promiſed—them that honour me, I will honour.

The ſcope and deſign of what I have ſaid was to perſuade you all to ſeek the knowledge of your intereſt in Chriſt's love, as the only means of making you happy. Knowing your intereſt in him is the ground of your love: for if you had no knowledge or experience of his love, how could you love him becauſe he firſt loved you. Your love is only the reflex act of his love. And you muſt know that he loves you, before you

you can be truly happy, and you muſt be happy in him, before you can have any motive to ſing his praiſes from your heart. It is the bleſſed employment of the faithful upon earth, and of the glorified ſaints in heaven, to give honour, and bleſſing, and praiſe, to the Lamb that was ſlain, and hath redeemed them unto God by his blood. Can you, my brethren, join your hearts and voices with theirs? Are you able to praiſe the Lord for his goodneſs, and to declare the wonders that he hath done for your ſoul---to be telling of his ſalvation from day to day, every day, and all the day? If you have not reaſon enough to be always giving of thanks, you may be aſſured you are not a real member of the church of Chriſt. If you were, you would find the truth of this ſcripture---"Bleſſed are they "that dwell in thy houſe, they will be always "praiſing thee." This is the ſweet employment of thoſe who dwell in the houſe of God, in the church here below. It is meet, right, and their bounden duty, that they ſhould at all times and in all places give thanks unto thee, O Lord, holy Father, almighty, everlaſting God. It is their duty, and they reckon it their privilege; and ſorry they are when they either find themſelves interrupted by the neceſſary affairs of this life, or through coldneſs of their affections are indiſpoſed for the delightful exerciſe of thankſgiving. But thanks be to God who will ſoon deliver

ver us from both theſe hinderances. Ere long we ſhall join the glorified ſpirits who are now ſtanding round the throne, ſinging the praiſes of God and the Lamb. This is their conſtant and happy employment. And his infinite adorable perfections will find them freſh matter of praiſe to all eternity. Suppoſe any of you were to go out of the world in love with ſin, and void of the love of Chriſt, you could not join them, nor would it be any pleaſure to you to hear them aſcribe bleſſing, and honour, and glory, and power to him that ſitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever. This is the felicity of an innumerable company of angels, and of the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect: but it could be none to you, becauſe your heart was not fitted for it. If you believe this, and if God's word be true you cannot deny it, then aſk yourſelves, Would you chooſe to die unfit for the joys of heaven? Surely you would not. Why then do you live unfit for them? If ever you reliſh them, you muſt begin to taſte their ſweetneſs here. In this life the praiſes of Chriſt muſt be your delight, if they ever be in the next. Weigh theſe motives, and give them the attention which they deſerve. Conſider them under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Pray for his grace. And may he diſpoſe you to ſeek the knowledge of your intereſt in Chriſt, and enable you to wait until his love be ſhed abroad in your hearts;

hearts; and then you will have reaſon to rejoice in your redeeming God in time and in eternity? And that this may be your happy experience, let us pray for it. May he who ſitteth upon the throne hear and anſwer.

Look down with mercy, O thou almighty and loving Saviour, upon this whole congregation. All hearts are open, all deſires known, and no ſecrets are hid from thee. O cleanſe the thoughts of our hearts by the inſpiration of thy Holy Spirit, and enable every one of us to form a right judgment of what we have heard. Stir up, we pray thee, thy power, and come among us, and with great might convince thoſe perſons of their guilt and of their danger, who are ſeeking happineſs in the world, and put it into their hearts to ſeek it in thee. Teach them, bleſſed Lord, that there is no true happineſs to be found in a world which lieth in ſin. Let them experience the deluſion of all worldly joys, that they may ſeek for thoſe joys which thine almighty love has to beſtow. And to thoſe, whom thou haſt given grace to ſeek, give more grace. Confirm and ſtrengthen the good deſires of thoſe who are waiting for thy ſalvation. Keep them by thy power, until thou ſave them from their ſins. And ſave us all, O thou Lord God omnipotent, ſave us from the power of ſin. Deliver us more and more from its dominion. May all the Lord's people ſerve him out of a pure heart,

and

and with love unfeigned; and may they go on rejoicing to do or to ſuffer his will, until he, who got himſelf glory by them upon earth, ſhall be glorified in them in heaven, by beſtowing upon them an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. And when he cometh thus to be glorified in his ſaints, and we know not how near the day of his coming may be—Oh may it be your happineſs and mine then to be found at his right hand, to hear the almighty Judge pronounce us bleſſed, and to enter into the joy of our Lord, there to praiſe Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three ſelf-exiſtent perſons in one Jehovah, to whom be honour and glory, dominion and power, thankſgiving and worſhip now, and for ever and ever. *Amen.*

SERMON X.

CHAP. viii. VER. 5.

Who is this that cometh up from the wilderneſs, leaning upon her beloved.

WE have in theſe words a beautiful repreſentation of our Lord's love to his people. In whatever light we conſider him, he is amiable and altogether lovely. He is not only great and good, but has alſo every thing that is great and good united in him, whereby he is able and willing to ſave poor ſinners unto the uttermoſt. They can want nothing but what he has to give. And happy for them, his heart is large and open. He is not ſtraitned in his bowels. He gave proof of it in the days of his fleſh, when he never refuſed any perſon that came to aſk his help. And no weary heavy-laden ſinner, who comes to him for his promiſed reſt, has ever ſince been caſt out. He is free to pardon and to cleanſe them from all their ſins, and to bring them into a ſtate of acceptance with God; and then he is able to keep them through faith unto ſalvation. This is a ſweet part of our Lord's character---he is able to keep them from falling. They are weak in themſelves, but he is ſtrong, and by faith

faith his ſtrength becomes theirs. They are engaged in a dangerous warfare, and have many powerful enemies, but the captain of their ſalvation has conquered them, and has promiſed to make them alſo more than conquerors. They have many troubles from within and from without, but he knows how to make them all work together for their good. He is able to carry them ſafely and ſweetly through all dangers. In this amiable light he is conſidered in the text. He is here drawn with every grace, which can recommend and endear him to the affections of his people: for he does not leave them to find their way through the wilderneſs, nor to overcome the difficulties of their paſſage through it, nor to get ſubſiſtence in it, but he conducts and carries them ſafe through all, while they lean upon him for ſtrength: for he is here ſupporting the church, while ſhe is journeying through the wilderneſs of this world to the promiſed land of everlaſting reſt. And the church is every believing ſoul—thou makeſt part of it whoever thou art, who canſt place thy truſt and confidence upon Jeſus Chriſt. Thou ſeeſt the perfect beauty of this image, and knoweſt what it means for the church to come from the wilderneſs leaning upon her beloved. O that the Eternal Spirit may teach you all what it means. He can open your eyes to ſee the ſenſe of it, and can open your hearts to feel its ſweetneſs. The experience

perience of it will make it ſweet indeed, and God grant you may now experience it, and may be able to lean upon Jeſus Chriſt for his grace and bleſſing on what you hear, while I ſhall

Firſt, Take the words in the ſame order they lie in the text, and endeavour to give the ſenſe of them. And then

Secondly, While I ſhall apply the doctrine to your ſpiritual benefit and improvement.

The perſon celebrated in this divine ſong is Jeſus Chriſt, and his graces and infinite perfections are here deſcribed under the moſt ſublime and affecting images. His love to the church, that is, to every believing ſoul, is the grand deſign of this highly-finiſhed painting. The manner of the compoſition is in the way of dialogue. The principal ſpeakers are Chriſt and the church, and twice or thrice the daughters of Jeruſalem, or ſome ſtanders by are introduced, in order to aſk leading queſtions, which would give occaſion to the anſwerer to open the ſubject more fully. Theſe perſons are, I ſuppoſe, the ſpeakers in the text, and make the enquiry---"Who is this that "cometh up from the wilderneſs leaning on her "beloved?" Who is this? The anſwer is, it is the church, of whoſe love to Chriſt this divine poem treats. And the church is neither the Jewiſh nor the Gentile, neither the Proteſtant nor the Papiſt, neither the Calviniſt nor the Lutheran: for the multitude in all outward churches

churches is the ſame. A man in his natural unregenerate ſtate is juſt the ſame, whether he be a Papiſt or a Proteſtant; but the few in theſe outward churches who live and walk in the ſpirit and power of Chriſt, they are the church. Every believing ſoul is a part of it; for of numbers of them the church is compoſed. Whoever is united by faith to Jeſus Chriſt, who is the head of the church, he is a living member of it. All the reſt are dead formal profeſſors, of whom, God knows, we have too many. The generality of our people content themſelves with a fooliſh notion of their belonging to the church of England, and of their being members of the eſtabliſhed church, although they ſeldom ſee the inſide of a church. They live in ignorance of her doctrines, and in diſobedience to her diſcipline. But may not the perſons, who frequent her ſervices and conſtantly attend upon the outward ordinances, think themſelves mighty good churchmen? They may, if they be united by ſaving faith to the head of the church; but without this union, a parcel of looſe ſtones thrown together in a heap would make juſt ſuch a church as they are. Whereas the ſpiritual building of which Chriſt is the chief corner-ſtone is fitly joined together and compacted in every part; and the cement or bond of union which keeps all the lively ſtones of this ſpiritual houſhold in their proper place and ſtation, is faith,

as

as the apoſtle has taught us, Heb. iii. 6. "Chriſt "is a ſon over his own houſe, whoſe houſe we "are, if we hold faſt the confidence of faith, "and the rejoicing of hope firm unto the end." If you attend ever ſo much upon the outward ordinances, yet if you have not this confidence of faith, and this rejoicing of hope, you make no part of the church of Chriſt. You want the proper cement of this ſpiritual building. You are but looſe ſtones, and therefore neither united to it, nor any part of it. You come to prayers —you attend twice a day on Sundays—you go once a month to the ſacrament—All this is very well, and you may go thus far, nay much farther, and yet be no member of Chriſt's myſtical body. For theſe outward ſervices profit nothing, unleſs the heart be rightly diſpoſed: and the heart is then rightly diſpoſed, when we go to theſe ſervices in faith, hoping to meet God in them, and to receive ſuch ſupplies of grace from him as we ſtand in need of. But when men uſe the ordinances in hopes of making themſelves good, and of attaining ſome ſelf-righteouſneſs, then they abuſe them, and the ſtricteſt attenders upon the ordinances with this view are the worſt churchmen, becauſe they moſt effectually cut themſelves off from all union with the head of the church. By going about to eſtabliſh their own righteouſneſs, they entirely deprive themſelves of that righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt, without

out which no man ſhall ſee the Lord. If the ſelf-righteous could be made to conſider this, they would not reſt in forms and ordinances, which are only the beggarly elements of religion when reſted in, but would ſeek the grace of God, which is the life and ſpirit of the ordinances, and then as they are his appointed means, he would certainly be found in them. And whoever finds him in them, and thereby receives continual ſupplies of grace for the advancement of his ſpiritual life, he is a member of the true church of Chriſt.

Our reformers have given us an excellent deſcription of the church in their 19th article. "The viſible church of Chriſt is a congregation "of faithful men, in the which the pure word of "God is preached, and the ſacraments be duly "adminiſtered according to Chriſt's ordinance." Here they allow none to be members, no not even of the viſible church, unleſs they be faithful men: faith uniting them to Jeſus Chriſt is that which makes them good churchmen, as it will evidently appear from a farther conſideration of this ſcripture: for the condition of the church is the next particular—"She is coming "up from the wilderneſs," from the waſte howling wilderneſs of this world, and travelling on towards the promiſed land of everlaſting reſt.

When man was firſt created, he was placed in a paradiſe of delight, where God had pro-

vided every thing neceſſary for the ſupport both of ſoul and body. But when he tranſgreſſed the juſt and holy law of God he was driven out of paradiſe, and turned into the wide barren world, where his body was forced to labour for the bread that periſheth, and to earn it by the ſweat of his brow, and his ſoul was baniſhed from God and from all ſweet communion with him, which had made paradiſe ſo much like heaven, and the remembrance of its ſweetneſs would make the pleaſanteſt ſpot upon the earth appear like a deſolate wilderneſs. As God is the life, and his preſence is the happineſs, of the ſoul, what muſt it be without God? More uncomfortable ſurely than the body would be in the moſt diſmal howling deſert: and we are all by nature in this ſtate. The world is indeed a place of baniſhment to every ſon of fallen Adam. What will you call it but a wilderneſs, where not a morſel of bread grows without human labour and cultivation? And is not this a juſt picture of the ſtate of the ſoul, which has no divine or ſaving knowledge of itſelf, and can receive none from any of the arts and ſciences? This barren earth cannot produce one ſingle ray of heavenly truth. It muſt all come down from above, as manna did upon the Iſraelites in the wilderneſs, otherwiſe our ſouls will periſh for lack of knowledge, as their bodies would have periſhed for want of bread. And ſince this is our condition, how

ſhall we obtain deliverance? We are here in bondage. Sin has chained us down in this wilderneſs. Satan watches us and tempts us to love our chains. The vain world ſmiles upon us, and would make us believe that we are ſtill in paradiſe: and God knows there are too many poor ſilly creatures who take this world for their only paradiſe. They are ſo dotingly fond of it, that nothing can break the enchantment. Though pains and miſeries come one upon the back of another, like wave after wave, yet ſtill they cannot entertain one hard thought of this dear world. They love it with all their hearts, and with all their ſouls, notwithſtanding the briars and thorns, which tear and ſcratch their fleſh, and the diſappointments and vexation they daily meet with. This fatal deluſion is the worſt part of their caſe, becauſe to be in ſuch a wilderneſs is a great calamity, but to be in love with it is a greater. It is a great misfortune to be ſick, but to be in love with ſickneſs, is worſe than the diſtemper, and much harder to be cured. And how then can the ſoul recover her liberty? She is enſlaved and chained down to this wilderneſs, and her enemies have her abſolutely in their power. She cannot ſtir one ſtep in her own might. Indeed ſhe would not deſire to ſtir. She loves her bondage. And ſince ſhe has neither the will nor the power, how can ſhe eſcape out of this wilderneſs? God be praiſed, there is a

way open, and this is through Jeſus, who has declared of himſelf, "I am the way," and all that fly to him eſcape from the miſeries of this wilderneſs, and are coming up from it, though not in their own ſtrength. The firſt deſire to leave it was from Jeſus Chriſt; he enabled the ſoul to ſeek deliverance, and then gave her ſtrength to break looſe from the chains wherewith ſhe was bound, and in his might ſhe is now travelling on. He has given her a proſpect of a better country, and for it ſhe has left off ſeeking happineſs in the wilderneſs. The honours, riches, and pleaſures there to be found have loſt their former value. She has turned her back upon them, and has ſet out upon her journey heavenwards. And ſee, all the way ſhe is coming up from the wilderneſs ſhe

"Leans upon her beloved." He ſupports every ſtep. This is the chief part of the beautiful image in the text. We here ſee the work of faith painted before our eyes in the moſt beautiful colours. There could not be a finer picture of the believer's reliance upon Chriſt for grace to ſupport every ſtep, and for ſtrength to carry him on in the chriſtian life, than to draw the church leaning upon her beloved. To lean and reſt the body upon any thing is the perfect repreſentation of faith leaning and reſting itſelf upon Chriſt. An able expoſitor upon the paſſage has theſe words—"She is leaning on her beloved; that is,

"as

" as they, who are weak, make uſe of a ſtaff in
" climbing of a ſtrait and ſteep ground, or eaſe
" themſelves by leaning upon one that is ſtrong,
" and eſpecially one whom they love for helping
" them in their way: ſo the believer is ſaid to
" come up from the wilderneſs, 'leaning on her
" beloved,' becauſe ſhe being weak in herſelf,
" and unfit for ſuch a difficult journey, by faith
" reſts on Chriſt, for helping her in the way,
" whereby ſhe is ſuſtained, and carried through
" in the duties of an holy walk, and the diffi-
" culties in her way, till ſhe come through the
" wilderneſs unto the land of reſt."

Every ſtep ſhe takes, ſpiritually by faith and love, ſhe cleaves to and relies upon Chriſt. There is a ſufficiency, and efficacy in Chriſt to ſave to the uttermoſt, to begin, and to carry on, and to perfect the whole work of ſalvation: he is the wiſdom, righteouſneſs, ſanctification, and redemption of believers; and therefore they would not only by faith be united to him, and lean upon him for the pardon of their ſins by his righteouſneſs, but they would alſo by faith depend upon him for their ſanctification, for their dying to ſin, and being alive unto God. And thus by the exerciſe of faith they fulfil the commandment—" Truſt in the Lord with all thine
" heart, and lean not to thine own underſtand-
" ing." If they overcome the world the victory is from truſting in the Lord by faith, from the

power

power of Chriſt apprehended and applied by faith. If ſin be dying in them, it is by the efficacy of his death apprehended and applied by faith. If they be alive unto God, "it is not I," ſays Paul, "but Chriſt liveth in me." It is by exerciſing faith on Chriſt, that I receive ſtrength to get forward in the way of duty, and to make a progreſs in holineſs. I derive continual ſupport from him, and the more I can depend and lean upon him by faith, the faſter I go, and the farther I advance in the way: for leaning on him, and coming up, are joined together in the text. If you gain any ground it muſt be by leaning upon the beloved Jeſus for his ſupport and ſtrength: for he is "the beloved" here ſpoken of. The beloved Son of the Father, in whom he declared he was well pleaſed, and he is become the beloved of the believing ſoul, which is now awakened by his Spirit, and ſtirred up by his power to leave this barren wilderneſs, and to ſeek a better country, *i. e.* a heavenly. His love begun the firſt deſire, and ſtill carries it on. His Spirit opened the eyes of faith to ſee a better country, and ſupports every ſtep towards it. And the believer leaning and relying upon his beloved Jeſus goes on ſweetly and ſafely. He beholds infinite excellencies, and daily diſcovers new worlds of delight in him; and the ſenſe of his own intereſt in them increaſes the delight. He can call all theſe his own. And to have a

property

property in them makes them ſtill more valuable. In this divine ſong he frequently lays a great ſtreſs upon this particular, eſpecially in the 5th chapter, where he has been drawing a picture of his Lord, and he puts the finiſhing ſtroke to it in theſe words—"This is my beloved—and this "is my friend." All his excellencies appear with a double grace to me, becauſe I can call them mine. This is the happy experience of every faithful ſoul. May the Holy Spirit beſtow it upon you, giving you a view of the Redeemer's excellencies, and convincing you of your intereſt in them, while I am

Secondly, Applying the doctrine contained in the text to your ſpiritual benefit and improvement. "Who is this that cometh up from the "wilderneſs?" It is the believer, whoſe affections are now raiſed above all earthly things, and he is coming up from the world leaning every ſtep he takes in the way towards heaven, upon his beloved Jeſus. The believer's heavenly mindedneſs is here repreſented by his coming up or aſcending from the wilderneſs, wherein he ſojourned, in his way to heaven, as the Iſraelites did in the wilderneſs, while they were on their journey to the Promiſed Land. The believer looks upon the pleaſanteſt and beſt cultivated ſpot of this earth as a mere wilderneſs, becauſe there is no true comfort or perfect reſt for the ſoul in any of the good things of it. He has

left off ſeeking happineſs in the enjoyment of them, being convinced that all worldly joys are empty and unſatisfying, and therefore he has turned his back upon them. He remembers Lot's wife. He would not caſt one wiſhful look after them. He keeps walking on with an unwearied courſe, becauſe he has an almighty ſupport. He leans upon one who is able to bear up every ſtep, who can ſtrengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Chriſt is his ſupport in his walk heavenwards. He takes Chriſt for his ſanctification, as well as for his juſtification. Chriſt muſt do all in him, as well as for him. Chriſt muſt enable him to do the works proper to a ſtate of acceptance, as well as bring him into it: for the believer knows of no power whereby he may be enabled to die unto ſin, and to live unto God, but his power only, who is almighty to ſave his people from their ſins. This is the doctrine. From the firſt moment our backs are turned upon the world, and we begin to leave the wilderneſs of ſin and miſery, until we come to the promiſed land of everlaſting reſt, we muſt lean all the way upon Chriſt. He muſt be our ſtay and ſupport. Faith muſt rely upon him fo the ſucceſs of every thing we undertake, and by this reliance it ſecures ſucceſs. The greateſt part of our misfortunes and diſappointments in our temporal as well as religious affairs come from the ignorance of this doctrine. We

know

know not how to truſt all in the hands of our loving Saviour. Worldly prudence will be managing its temporal matters without reſigning all to him: and mens pride and ſelf-ſufficiency cannot bear to be ſtript of all merit, and to rely entirely for acceptance upon the merits of another. It is too low and degrading an idea of the dignity of man to ſuppoſe him to be in a ſtate of condemnation until Chriſt juſtify him, and to be unable to take one ſtep in his chriſtian courſe, unleſs the Spirit of Chriſt aſſiſt and ſupport him. Theſe truths are too mortifying to be generally received, but believers know them to be truths by happy experience. They are aſſured, that there is no other way to walk contentedly and cheerfully homewards, but to lean and reſt all the way upon him, who is both their guide and their ſtrength, who has them and all their concerns in his gracious hands. Although this be the only way to true happineſs, yet it is extremely difficult to convince ſinners of it. Every error leads them away from it, and error is infinite. I will endeavour through God's help to correct ſome of the moſt common errors. And

Firſt, I ſhall ſpeak of thoſe which all careleſs ſinners fall into. Sin cut off all communion with, and reliance upon, God, and whoever lives in his natural unregenerate ſtate cannot rely upon him for any good; the ſinner leans upon ſome worldly enjoyment for happineſs, and the careleſs

leſs ſinner is ſecure in this worldly enjoyment. He has no thoughts of ſeeking happineſs in Jeſus Chriſt, and therefore has no deſire to lean with faith upon him. The danger of this is evident, becauſe every man in it is under condemnation, and is a child of wrath; and it is wonderful that the devil ſhould be ſo far able to delude ſinners as to make them ſit eaſy under it: for did they but know and feel their condition as it really is, ſinful and dangerous, they would then acknowledge themſelves to be miſerable ſinners; and were they convinced of their want of ſalvation, and that there is no Saviour but Jeſus Chriſt, then would they in earneſt ſeek ſalvation through him, and not as they do, labour to deprive themſelves of it with all their might: for they are daily adding to their ſin, and to their guilt, and to their miſery. When they read, "There is "ſalvation in none other than Jeſus Chriſt," they are deluded into a falſe peace, although they are not aſſured they have ſalvation in him. When God declares, "that without holineſs no "man ſhall ſee him," they know they are not holy, and yet they never conſider what eternal miſery it will be not to ſee God. Thus theſe careleſs ſinners being out of a ſtate of ſalvation, are in danger of periſhing every moment. Jeſus Chriſt alone can ſave them, and yet they prefer ſin to him and his eternal ſalvation. The guilt of this is ſo monſtrous, that men could not fall

into

into it unleſs they were under a ſtrong deluſion. And yet the extreme folly of this conduct is equal to the guilt of it. Men who have no reſt nor ſtay upon Chriſt cannot be happy in the preſent world. They are not upon the foundation, the rock of ages. Their happineſs is built upon ſand, againſt which, when the rains deſcend, and the floods come, and the winds blow, it will fall. When the evil day comes theſe careleſs ſinners have nothing to reſt upon. When affliction preſſes hard upon them, they ſink under it. When ſickneſs ſeizes them, down fall their high ſpirits, the approach of death is moſt dreadful, and they ſometimes die for fear of dying. Or if they meet with heavy troubles, they are often ſo miſerable, that life is quite a burden; and if natural conſcience ſhould at this time begin to torment them with its horrors, theſe added to their other diſtreſſes would overſet them. Having none of the comforts of the goſpel to ſupport them under this complicated miſery, they often ſeek relief in ſelf-murder. This is frequently the cauſe of that dreadful crime, which can never be repented of. And thus theſe poor miſerable cowards murder themſelves rather than live in pain, and fly to hell for refuge from the miſeries of life. Are not theſe evident proofs, that there is no ſolid happineſs out of Chriſt, and that whatever men lean upon for happineſs but him, are nothing better than ſo many broken reeds?

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Do we not ſee theſe proofs confirmed by daily experience? When God ſends any public calamity, the ſword or the peſtilence, or famine, ſinners receive them as judgments, and are terrified, but not reformed. If he ariſe to ſhake terribly the earth, their hearts tremble more than the ground does under their feet: they fear leſt it ſhould open every moment and ſwallow them up. If it ſhould, their conſciences tell them they cannot eſcape the pit of deſtruction. This is the miſerable condition of careleſs ſinners, who have no truſt and confidence in Jeſus Chriſt. They are an eaſy prey to every enemy, and they are made miſerable by the fears and terrors of their own conſciences. And is it not the fooliſhneſs of folly to be always toſt upon ſuch a tempeſtuous ſea, when you may be ſaved from all the ſtorms of life? Who would chooſe to have his peace of mind lie at the mercy of every wind and wave? Is this prudent, is this ſafe, when he that commandeth the winds and the waves has only to ſay, "Peace, be ſtill," and there will be a great calm? Thy tempeſtuous ſoul will be compoſed. Thou wilt find a peace of mind that paſſeth all underſtanding. Oh unpardoned ſinner, haſt thou no deſire, haſt thou no wiſh now riſing in thy mind for the enjoyment of this peace of God? May he, without whom thou canſt not ſo much as think a good thought, put it into thy heart to ſeek it. And when thou art once made ſenſible

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of thy ſore diſeaſe, here is thy remedy. Chriſt is the infallible phyſician of the ſoul, and he has a ſovereign balm to heal every malady of ſin. Does thy conſcience accuſe and torment? The ſprinkling of the blood of Jeſus can take out the ſenſe of guilt, and give thee joy and peace in believing. Doſt thou begin to be weary of thy ſins and thy ſufferings? Aſk Jeſus Chriſt to take off thy burden. Come to him, who bore all thy ſins, and he will eaſe thee of thy load, and thou ſhalt find peace and reſt unto thy ſoul. He has promiſed it to every returning ſinner, and he is a God of truth. "Caſt thy burden upon the "Lord and he will ſuſtain thee;" this is his promiſe, and he daily fulfils it. Look among believers and thou wilt ſee it literally fulfilled. Thou canſt not deny but that being juſtified by faith, they have peace with God, and are happy in the ſenſe of his love to them through Jeſus Chriſt their Lord; whereby they are ſupported and comforted under all God's dealings with them, knowing that he will make all things work together for their good. And accordingly we read in ſcripture of his having never failed them, who leaned upon him for help. When they were viſited with ſickneſs, or poverty, or any other affliction, he enabled them to bear his fatherly correction without murmuring or repining. When ſin cries aloud for vengeance, and juſtice draws the ſword, and cuts off the inhabi-

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tants of the earth with a ſwift deſtruction, then believers happily experience that their gracious God in the midſt of wrath remembers mercy. His judgments upon his enemies are mercies to them. When the earth quakes and trembles under their feet, their ſoul does not melt away becauſe of the trouble. The rock upon which they ſtand cannot be moved, and therefore in the midſt of the earthquake, they can triumphantly ſay, "God is our refuge and ſtrength, a very "preſent help in trouble, therefore will not we "fear, though the earth be removed, and though "the mountains be carried into the midſt of the "ſea." Would not you think yourſelves happy if this was your caſe? And yet believers have ſtill a greater happineſs. When death itſelf approaches it is welcome: for the ſting of death is taken out, and they have no fear left about any thing, but ſin. They are more afraid of ſin, than of poiſon. They would not live in ſin to gain the world, and in the ſtrength of their beloved Saviour on whom they lean and rely, they can and do conquer ſin, ſo that it does not reign in their mortal bodies. What do you think of the ſafety and happineſs of thoſe perſons, who are afraid of nothing, but of offending their reconciled Father? Certainly they are the happieſt men upon earth; and every ſinner would envy them, if the devil had not propagated an opinion that they are all under a deluſion. If any of

you,

you, my brethren, have entertained this opinion, weigh the matter carefully, and you will find this makes nothing for your caſe. For what you ſuppoſe to be deluſion is a ſweet and comfortable ſtate of mind, promiſed in the word of God, and beſtowed upon the children of God; and are they deluded, think ye, who ſay they have received nothing more than what God had promiſed to give? That faith, by which ye ſuppoſe us deluded, does certainly free us from the commiſſion of many ſins, and from many of the miſeries of the preſent life, and it deludes us into a kind of fortitude, that not only enables us to bear reproach, contempt, injuries, and afflictions, but alſo to rejoice under them, when we meet them for following Chriſt. Oh happy deluſion! We are deluded into a ſtrong belief that God loves us in Jeſus Chriſt, and therefore we are confident, that whatever he appoints for us is the beſt. Be it poverty, or ſickneſs, or any outward evil, we can reſign ourſelves contentedly to his holy will, being aſſured that our loving Father would ſend us nothing, but what will be for our good. Is all this a deluſion? Can a man be deluded into ſuch real ſolid happineſs? Glory be to God, I have taſted a little of it, and I would not part with the bleſſing for a thouſand worlds. Upon this earth there is no happineſs like it. Heaven only exceeds it. Therefore you gain nothing by giving credit to the

the devil's lie. He would have you to believe that all God's people are under a deluſion, and that they only fancy they are ſafe and happy by leaning upon Jeſus Chriſt. And can you believe this barefaced lie? Who but the father of lies could raiſe ſuch an evil report upon the good land, and who but his children would give any credit to it? For the ſpirit of truth ſpeaks a different language. Hear what he has promiſed, and then judge, whether we are deluded, who ſay, he has fulfilled his promiſe to us: "Thou "wilt keep him in perfect peace whoſe mind is "ſtayed on thee, becauſe he truſteth in thee. "Truſt ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord "Jehovah is everlaſting ſtrength." Here he engages to keep thoſe perſons in perfect peace by his everlaſting ſtrength, whoſe minds are ſtayed upon him. Fear then, careleſs ſinner, to call this perfect peace a deluſion: for thereby thou wouldeſt aſcribe to the devil the glory of God's work; but rather aſk God to ſhew thee thy guilt and wretchedneſs, that thou mayeſt find thy want of that peace which God has to give. Haſt thou no deſire to aſk? If thou canſt not ſend up one wiſh for it, may his good Spirit now put it into thy heart. Oh that thou couldſt pray to be in the happy ſtate of the faithful ſoul, "Coming up from the wilderneſs leaning upon "her beloved." And to every one who deſires to be in this ſtate I make my ſecond remark.

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I ſuppoſe you begin to find the heavy burden of ſin, and it is growing intolerable; then look to Chriſt, that he may take it upon him, and eaſe you. He can ſuſtain it; for he hath borne the weight of the ſins of the world, and he will eaſe you of your burden, whenever you can caſt it upon the Lord. But if you are diſcouraged from truſting in him, and find your ſins to be ſo many and ſo great, that you fear he will not receive you: fear not. Be your ſins ever ſo heinous, if you are ſenſible of them, and can aſk mercy, he will be merciful. He never ſhut any one out of mercy becauſe he was a great ſinner. The greateſt have found mercy, and ſo may you, if you go as one of the greateſt to aſk it. Aſk, and ye ſhall have. Pray to Jeſus for his help, and he will raiſe you up. Pray for faith, and he will enable you to lean upon him for wiſdom, and righteouſneſs, and holineſs, and eternal redemption.

But you have, you ſay, been praying and waiting upon him, and yet you find nothing but coldneſs and deadneſs in your heart. You make no progreſs. Though you deſire to lean upon Chriſt every ſtep, yet you cannot put your whole truſt and confidence in him, your mind is full of ſo many doubts and fears. Several perſons, when they firſt ſet out in the ways of religion, get into this temper. They are always diſputing and doubting, whether this ſtep be

right, and that ſervice accepted, looking too much into their own hearts, and looking too little at Chriſt, and ſo they puzzle and perplex themſelves, and can gain no ground. If you would be freed from theſe difficulties, follow the light which God gives, and make uſe of the help which he offers; and that is the way to receive more. You, my brethren, are ſeeking his promiſed ſalvation. Enquire, what you are to truſt to, and to reſt upon at preſent. If God has made a proviſion for your caſe, it ought to be your ſupport. And has he not left you the word of promiſe to rely upon? He has commanded you, and it is your bounden duty, to believe the report which God has given of his Son. You are required to take him at his word, and to believe, that Chriſt is, as the ſcripture has ſet him forth, a Saviour willing and able to ſave every ſinner, who comes unto him. This is the ſcripture character of Chriſt; and if you do not believe what it ſays concerning him, you make God a liar. And you will call in queſtion both the faithfulneſs and the goodneſs of God, if you think that he has promiſed any thing to them that ſeek, which he will not fulfil to you who are ſeeking. Heaven and earth ſhall paſs away, but not one tittle of God's promiſes ſhall paſs away, until all be fulfilled.

Is not this then, my brethren, the point wherein you fail? You are ſeeking Chriſt, and his ſalvation,

ſalvation, but you want ſomething more than the word of promiſe, before you reſt upon it in the manner God requires. You deſire a particular application of the promiſes, and want the experience of them, before you can wholly rely upon the faithfulneſs and truth of God who made them. Examine, whether this be not the caſe; and if it be, conſider how you diſcredit the word of God. You are commanded to believe it, and unleſs you think God is a liar, you may ſafely rely upon it. It is your duty to receive Chriſt, as he is there ſet forth, and to wait for the witneſs of the Spirit in the application of Chriſt, when and in what manner he ſhall think proper to give it you. And ſuppoſe your belief of his word of promiſe, your faith of reliance, may be very weak, yet however bring it into act. Let it operate. Lean upon Jeſus Chriſt, as well as you are enabled, and you will certainly go on lamely perhaps at firſt, but however halt on, and believe that he pities you, and lay the care of bringing you ſafely through upon him. Don't lie complaining and arguing, but believe his word, and act faith upon the word of promiſe, and the Lord ſhall be with you. And the weaker you find yourſelf, you have the more need to rely upon Chriſt. Look more at him, and leſs at yourſelf, and wait humbly upon him, and you will not long want his promiſed comfort. He will give you joy and peace in believing, and

ſhew you that you are in the happy number of the redeemed of the Lord, to whom I make my third and laſt remark.

My chriſtian brethren, you have experienced the truth of the doctrine in the text, and you know the happineſs of leaning with faith upon Chriſt. You are enabled to truſt the whole of your ſalvation on him. In all your duties you lean upon him. You hear, and read the word, and pray, and give alms, and attend at the Lord's table, not to make yourſelves righteous in the ſight of God. This is not your motive. You know that he who made your perſons righteous, muſt alſo make your duties acceptable. He, that juſtified you, is the ſame alſo that muſt ſanctify you. Nothing can make you holy, but his good Spirit. To this you truſt. And as he has promiſed that his grace ſhall at all times be ſufficient for you, you can therefore lean upon Jeſus in the worſt of times, and the ſoreſt trials. The more you are afflicted, the more do you rely upon him, and cleave the cloſer to him, and therefore the ſtronger you grow. Sickneſs cannot weaken your hold; death itſelf cannot break it off: "for when I walk through the valley of "the ſhadow of death, ſays the Pſalmiſt, then "thou art my ſupport, then thy rod and thy "ſtaff comfort me:" leaning upon thee I neither fear death, nor him that hath the power of death.

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The text thus explained and applied, teaches us one of the moſt uſeful leſſons for the conduct of life. All men are ſeeking happineſs, but few find it; becauſe they ſeek it where it is not. It has been a general enquiry among thinking men, how they might be able to bear up under afflictions, how they might keep the mind eaſy, when the body was in pain and ſickneſs, and how they might be happy in all circumſtances; but upon the principles of moral philoſophy they could never fortify the mind againſt the evils of life. Various remedies were propoſed, but they all failed, when they were brought to the trial. But the great ſecret is revealed in my text. If you would be always happy, lean upon Chriſt; take off all truſt and confidence from every other object, and place them upon Chriſt. It is a command, "Caſt all your care upon him," he will bear it for you; but in order to do this, you muſt know by faith that "he careth for you"—for how can you truſt yourſelf and all your affairs in his hands, unleſs you have ſome evidence of his love to you? But when you receive faith from the gift, and from the operation of God, and thereby know your intereſt in the promiſes made through Chriſt, and, as our church expreſſes it, are aſſured of the favour and goodneſs of God towards you, then you can lean upon him for his promiſed help. And this faith can carry you

ſafely through all troubles and temptations, be they ever ſo great, becauſe it is almighty. Faith does not attack them in the ſtrength of nature, but in the omnipotence of grace. It relies upon the promiſe of God, and believes that it ſhall be done according to his word. When faith can thus plead the promiſes and lean upon Chriſt for the fulfilling them, it will certainly receive what ever is promiſed—power to ſubdue ſin—power to live unto God—grace ſufficient to reſiſt temptations—comfort under afflictions—ſtrength in the inner man when the body is in pain and ſickneſs—and victory over the laſt enemy, death: "for "all things are poſſible to him that believeth."

Here then is the infallible ſcripture remedy for the evils of life. May the Lord God diſpoſe all your hearts to take it. If you would be ſafe and happy, lean upon Chriſt. But if there be any of you, my brethren, who are ſtill determined to lean upon ſome other thing for happineſs, be aſſured it will deceive you in the end. You may ſeem to go on ſmoothly and merrily for a while, but there is a day coming, when you will ſee the falſeneſs of your confidence. In the day of ſickneſs, in the day of death, and much more in the great day of judgment, you will have nothing to ſupport you, unleſs you lean upon Jeſus Chriſt. Be perſuaded then in time to put your whole truſt and confidence in him. If you ſee your want

want of a Saviour, go to him, and he will ſupply all your wants. Aſk and ſeek the precious gift of faith, until you are able to turn your backs upon all worldly happineſs, and to come up from the wilderneſs leaning upon your beloved Jeſus. And whenever the grace of God brings you into this happy ſtate, you will then go on in your chriſtian courſe ſweetly and cheerfully. You will find the preſence of your God with you every ſtep, and being mightily ſtrengthened with his Spirit in the inner man, the work of ſalvation will proſper in your ſouls. Oh that we may be all ſtrong in the Lord, and in the power of his might to travel on in his ſtrength. May every one of you, who has come up from the wilderneſs of the world to the houſe of the Lord this day, be enabled to lean and rely upon Chriſt for his promiſed help, and may receive out of his fulneſs grace for grace. If you have never yet been united to him by ſaving faith, God grant his good Spirit may bleſs this diſcourſe, and make it the means of uniting you to Jeſus Chriſt. And if you be now united, Oh may you find the bond of union growing ſtronger and ſtronger every day, until death perfect it, and eternity continue it in endleſs bliſs and glory. We look up unto thee, O moſt gracious God, for theſe bleſſings, and we aſk them in that excellent form of prayer which our church has taught us to

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uſe this day. Enable us to pray in faith, while we ſay,

"O Lord, we beſeech thee to keep thy church "and houſhold continually in thy true religion, "that they who do lean only upon the hope of "thy heavenly grace, may ever more be de- "fended by thy mighty power, through Jeſus "Chriſt our Lord. Amen." Fifth Sunday after Epiphany.

SERMON XI.

CHAP. viii. VER. 6, 7.

Set me as a ſeal upon thine heart, as a ſeal upon thine arm: for love is ſtrong as death, jealouſy is cruel as the grave, the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a moſt vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the ſubſtance of his houſe for love, it would utterly be contemned.

THIS ſong of loves, which treats of the pure and ſpiritual affection between Chriſt and the believer, is very little underſtood. Worldly and ſenſual men read it with worldly and ſenſual tempers, and therefore find nothing divine in it. It is to ſuch perſons of all ſcripture the moſt exceptionable: and no wonder. St. Paul gives us the reaſon, "The natural man, ſays he, diſ-"cerneth not the things of the Spirit of God, "neither can he know them, becauſe they are "ſpiritually diſcerned:" for want of this ſpiritual diſcernment, he cannot ſee the things of the Spirit of God treated of in this divine ſong. But it is nevertheleſs a fine painting, although theſe blind men cannot judge of it. The ſubject is the union of Chriſt with the believer.

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He that is not a believer does not know what it is to be united to Chriſt; and therefore he is as incapable of judging of this poem as a blind man is of the expreſſion of a beautiful picture. But he that has the love of Chriſt in his heart, who is one with Chriſt, and Chriſt with him, he knows what the believer means, when, ſpeaking to Chriſt in the text, he ſays, "Set me as a ſeal "upon thine heart, as a ſeal upon thine arm: "for love is ſtrong as death, jealouſy is cruel as "the grave, the coals thereof are coals of fire, "which hath a moſt vehement flame. Many "waters cannot quench love, neither can the "floods drown it: if a man would give all the "ſubſtance of his houſe for love, it would utterly "be contemned." This is the believer's prayer. He has taſted of the loving kindneſs of his Lord. The Holy Ghoſt had ſhed abroad the love of Chriſt in his heart, and he could truly ſay, "I "love him, becauſe he firſt loved me." He was happy in the enjoyment of his Lord's love; but he wanted more, as every one does who has taſted of it. He hungered and thirſted for more full experience of it, and earneſtly prayed to be rooted and grounded in love, that he might be able to comprehend what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Chriſt that paſſeth knowledge. The believer knew it was his intereſt to ſtudy this love, and to try to take ſome dimenſions of it, although

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it ſurpaſs all human underſtanding, yea the underſtanding of all ſaints, of angels and glorified ſpirits, to comprehend it fully; but the more he did comprehend, the happier he found himſelf. When he conſidered the wonders of Chriſt's love in his humiliation, in his life, in his ſufferings, in his death, in his reſurrection and aſcenſion, and in the glories of his mediatorial kingdom, he found particular ſweetneſs in this conſideration, that he had an intereſt in all the good offices of this love. He knew, that whatever it did for ſinners was done for him. And would not this greatly recommend the ſtudy of Chriſt's love above all other ſtudies: for how exceedingly delightful muſt it be to trace out the ſteps of his love, ſince every new diſcovery is a freſh addition to the believer's happineſs? Upon this experimental plan the ſpeaker in the text conſidered the ſubject. He prays for a more full and perfect enjoyment of Chriſt's love, and urges his petition by ſeveral motives taken from what Chriſt did and ſuffered for ſinners. He takes a view of the triumphs of his love in the greatneſs of his actions and ſufferings, and then by them pleads with him for a more abundant meaſure of love. May the divine Spirit enable every one of you to put up the ſame prayer. May he ſhed abroad in your hearts that love, which will make your conſideration of this ſcripture uſeful and profitable.

profitable. Under his guidance then let us enquire,

First, Into the ſenſe and meaning of the words, and

Secondly, Into the practical uſe we can make of them.

This divine ſong is drawn up in the manner of a dialogue. The ſpeakers are Chriſt and the church. The church is every faithful ſoul, which is united to Chriſt as the members are to the body, or the branches to the vine. When ſome men hear the word church, they are apt to apply it to national or congregational aſſemblies; but the ſcripture applies it to believers, and to them only, allowing none to be true members, not even of any chriſtian communion, unleſs they be members of Chriſt's myſtical body.—And our reformers in the 19th article give us this definition of the viſible church—"It is a congregation "of faithful men, in which the pure word of "God and the ſacraments be duly adminiſ-"tered." One of theſe faithful men (for of numbers of them the church is compoſed) is here expreſſing the fervent prayer of his heart, to have more full experience of Chriſt's love. He had no doubt of the favour and goodneſs of God towards him in Chriſt. He had received many clear proofs of it. He had the ſcripture marks and evidences in his own ſoul of Chriſt's being his beloved and his friend; and he was

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happy in knowing this. The ſenſe of Chriſt's love to him had enabled him to love Chriſt in return, and therefore he was led to pray for the continuance, and for the increaſe of Chriſt's love—" Set me as a ſeal upon thine heart;" and convey to me under thy ſeal all the graces and bleſſings which thy love has to give: for the foundation of God ſtandeth ſure, having this ſeal, The Lord knoweth them that are his; he knoweth them that have his ſeal upon them, O ſeal me then for thine. When a man ſets his hand and ſeal to a will or to a deed of gift, it is as if he ſhould declare, This is my laſt will and teſtament, this is my act and deed. So when Chriſt ſets the believer as a ſeal upon his heart, it is as if he ſhould declare—I ſeal this perſon for mine, and give unto him freely all the benefits of the new teſtament in my blood, and this is properly atteſted by my word and by my Spirit. The word is the outward witneſs, the Spirit applying the word is the inward witneſs. The ſcripture very clearly aſſigns to him the office of ſealing believers, as Eph. i. 13. " After that ye " believed in Chriſt, ye were ſealed with the " Holy Spirit of promiſe;" and chap. iv. 30. " Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, by whom " ye are ſealed unto the day of redemption." Chriſt redeemed both our real and perſonal eſtate, but we are not in poſſeſſion of either, until it be conveyed to us under the ſeal of the Holy Spirit.

Chriſt's

Chriſt's redemption without the Holy Spirit's application, is like a deed without a ſeal, which you know can legally convey nothing. It is the ſigning and ſealing that makes it good in law. And when the Holy Spirit ſeals the believer, then he receives the earneſt of his inheritance. The believer in the text had this earneſt in himſelf, and therefore he prayed fervently for a greater meaſure of Chriſt's love; and he prayed the more fervently, as well from the lively remembrance he had of his former miſery, while he was without Chriſt in the world, as from the pleaſing ſenſe of his preſent happineſs. All the time his heart had been ſet upon the world, he remembered in what a vain ſhadow he had been walking, and how he had diſquieted himſelf in vain. From whatever he ſought happineſs, he was diſappointed; and therefore convinced of the emptineſs of every creature-comfort, and of the ſinfulneſs of reſting in them—having found the beſt of them unable to fill the deſires of his ſoul, he had turned from the creature to God: God had every thing to give that could make him completely happy, and God the Saviour was willing to give it. As his power is, ſo is his love; they are alike infinite. The ſpeaker in the text had happy experience of Chriſt's love, and did not doubt of his power to ſave With a grateful ſenſe of what Chriſt had already done, he prayed that the Holy Spirit would make him increaſe

and abound in love. My brethren, is this your prayer? Do you know ſo much of his love to you, as to pray for more love to him? If you are not ſeeking happineſs in his love, in what have you been ſeeking it all your life, or in what are you now ſeeking it? Out of Chriſt you could ſeek it in nothing but in the ſinful love of the creature. And now aſk yourſelves what you have found? If you deal honeſtly with your ſouls, you muſt confeſs that you have met with continual diſappointments. And why then will you not be wiſe from experience? Are you tired and weary of the dull round of worldly joys? Then pray the Holy Spirit to turn your affections from theſe deluding objects to the Lord Jeſus, and when your hearts are ſet upon him, he will then make you perfectly, eternally bleſſed. Bleſſedneſs is his to give. The world has it not. Oh turn then from it to our loving God, and beg you may know ſo much of his love, as to be able to pray with the believer in the text that Chriſt would "ſet you as a "ſeal upon his heart," and let you know your intereſt in his love. When you are ſealed for his, and find his affections are placed upon you, then you will have the comfortable enjoyment of his preſent graces, and ſure and certain hope of your inheriting the promiſes of eternal life: for then he will alſo "ſet you as a ſeal upon his "arm." His arm is his power. The hand is the

the active part of the body, by which the ſtrength of it is exerted. We labour and work with our hands; and when the ſcripture ſpeaks of the arm of the Lord, it means his active power, which the faithful ſoul here deſires may be exerciſed continually for its ſalvation. To be as a ſeal upon his heart would be of no uſe, without the ſeal upon his arm. His love would not be a bleſſing, unleſs it was an active, operative love. But it is therefore deſirable to partake of Chriſt's love, becauſe it will always awake the arm of the Lord, and will bring ſalvation. His love and his power are never ſeparated; his heart and his arm act together, and therefore the believing ſoul does not put them aſunder, but prays in the text, that the beloved Saviour would give her experience of both—"O ſet me as a ſeal "upon thy heart, that whatever thy love diſ- "poſes thee to do for ſinners, I may ſhare and "partake in it—Oh ſet me alſo as a ſeal upon "thine arm, let me alſo, bleſſed Jeſus, be en- "graven upon the palms of thy hands, that in "all thy works thou mayeſt remember me with "mercy. Let thy love engage thy power to "make all things work together for my good."

Theſe are the deſires of the faithful in the text; and they are the fervent deſires of every true believer. And if there be any of you, who are not convinced that theſe are the breathings of true faith, then you are ignorant of the nature of

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the nature of Chriſt's love. You know it not, becauſe you have had no experience of it. If you had ever found your want of his love, and had ever taſted of it, you would bear your teſtimony to the truth of the following deſcription, viz. "That his love is ſtrong as death, the ardor "of it is harder than the grave, the coals thereof "are coals of fire, which hath a moſt vehement "flame, burning with ſuch an inextinguiſhable "affection, that many waters could not quench "it, neither could the floods drown it, and of "ſo ineſtimable a price, that if a man ſhould "think of buying it, or of meriting it, and "would give all the ſubſtance of his houſe for "it, it would utterly be deſpiſed." Theſe are the excellencies of Chriſt's love, for which the faithful ſoul ſo earneſtly deſired farther experience of it, and for which you will deſire it with the ſame earneſtneſs, as ſoon as you are made ſenſible of your wants. When you find the miſery of ſin, and the wretched ſlavery of ſerving ſatan, and the world, and the fleſh, who have no wages to give you but death, then you will wiſh your ſouls under the protection of that love, which is "ſtrong as death." The love of Chriſt was ſtronger than death: for he conquered death, and took out its ſting. And the ſting of death will be taken out of your conſcience, when it is ſprinkled with his atoning blood. His love brought him down from heaven, and he took a

body of fleſh, in which he might obey, and ſuffer, and die. Accordingly he became obedient, obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs. He died the painful, ignominious, and accurſed death of the croſs. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend; but how far does the love of Jeſus exceed this inſtance? he laid down his life, not for friends but for ſinners, for enemies, the bittereſt enemies, who perſecuted him even unto death---He died for his perſecutors. Greater love than this there cannot be: for as he died to ſave his enemies from death, ſo he roſe again, that they might riſe to a newneſs of life, whereby he ſhewed "his love to be ſtronger than the "grave." Our tranſlation reads, jealouſy is cruel as the grave---The word rendered jealouſy, denotes the ardor and intenſeneſs of Chriſt's love, not what he thought of the love of others to him, but the nature of his love to them, the great degree, the flaming ardor and intenſeneſs of it, which made him ſubmit not only to death, but alſo to go down to the grave. In the priſon of the grave the bodies of all the dead were ſhut up. The priſon was ſecured with bars and gates, and guarded by him that had the power of death, and he had ſuffered not one priſoner for four thouſand years to eſcape. To this priſon the Lord Jeſus went down, and he was detained in it for three days: but it was not poſſible that

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he ſhould be holden any longer. On the third day he broke through the gate of death, and demonſtrated that his love was ſtronger than the grave. And when he is deſcribing his victory to the beloved apoſtle, he repreſents it under a very beautiful image. "I am he that liveth, "ſays he, and was dead, and behold I am alive "for ever more, Amen, and have the keys of "hell and of death." My brethren, are any of you afraid to die? Has death ſtill a ſting, and the grave victory over you? If they have, did you ever conſider what was the reaſon? Is it not becauſe you either do not believe that Chriſt has the keys of death and the grave in his hands, or elſe you have no certainty that he will uſe them for your intereſt? You have no knowledge of Chriſt's love to you. The Holy Ghoſt never ſhed it abroad in your heart, perhaps you never deſired it, and therefore you are ignorant of his having died and riſen from the grave for your ſalvation. If you knew your intereſt in his death, and had experienced the power of his reſurrection, you would no longer fear death and the grave: for then faith would enable you to triumph over both. You would have nothing to fear, but every thing bleſſed to hope for from them, after you knew that Chriſt had ſet you as a ſeal upon his heart, and as a ſeal upon his arm: for then death and the grave, inſtead of ſeparating you from the love of God which is in

Chriſt Jeſus our Lord, would bring you to the more full and eternal enjoyment of it.

My brethren, if you have not this love, do you deſire it? Can you pray for it? If the Holy Spirit has diſcovered to you your want of it, and has put you upon aſking, aſk, and he will grant you your heart's deſire. You ſhall know Chriſt, and the power of his reſurrection, know him to be your Saviour and your God. And this experience of his love to you, will open to your underſtanding the next words in the deſcription, viz. that the ardor of Chriſt's love is like coals of fire burning clear and bright with a moſt vehement flame, "ſuch as many waters could not "quench." Theſe many waters are the many troubles he met with, and they were ſo many, that they would have quenched any love but his. He went through a ſea of troubles from the manger to the croſs, but his love burnt all the time with ſuch a vehement flame, that the many waters he waded through could not quench it. Herod perſecuted him while a child, and forced him to flee his country, but his love to his enemies brought him back. His very humiliation, until he entered on his public miniſtry, was a great trial. As God he was the higheſt in heaven, as man he was one of the loweſt on earth—That was conſequently the higheſt love which ſtooped the loweſt to ſave ſinners. You may read in the goſpels the hiſtory of the many troubles

bles he went through. His public life was one continued ſcene of oppoſition. Trouble came, like wave after wave, raging and lifting up their heads on high, but the ardor of his love mounted and flamed above them all. You know that nothing cools love ſo much as meeting with hatred; he was hated, even for doing good, and yet he loved his enemies. They poured cold water upon his love, by railing at his doctrine, blaſpheming his perſon, blaſpheming his miracles, but his love, being of an uncommon nature, burnt the brighter. He went on doing good to his revilers and his blaſphemers. And though the rulers and nation of the Jews, a few poor people excepted, would not receive him for the promiſſed Meſſiah, yet theſe many waters could not quench his love. It burnt with a pure flame, which neither the ingratitude nor the vile treatment of mankind could in the leaſt damp, or abate. And we need not wonder that many waters could not quench, "for the floods could "not drown the love of Chriſt." It ſtill kept its ardor, when the overflowing flood broke over his head. When the floods of ungodly men roſe up againſt him, and tried his love with every pain and reproach, which is diſtreſſing to human nature, they only ſerved to make his love ſhine out the purer and brighter. In his laſt ſufferings, theſe floods tried to drown his love, but it mounted up triumphant above all. In the garden,

den, on the eve of the paſſion, he had a proſpect of what he was to undergo, and as there was no other way for man to be ſaved, but for him to drink the bitter cup, he therefore reſolved to take it, and to drink it up to the very dregs. No ſooner had he ſpoken the words, "Father, "thy will be done," but the cup was inſtantly put into his hands. He is apprehended, and all his diſciples forſake him. Not one, not Peter himſelf, durſt own him. As a malefactor he is brought before the high-prieſt, accuſed for ſaying he was the Son of God, ſhamefully intreated and ſpit upon, blindfolded by way of inſult on his prophetical office, and ſtruck upon the face, led to Pilate, tried and acquitted, and yet whipt and ſcourged, crowned with thorns by way of inſult on his regal office, and the thorns driven into his head by the barbarous ſoldiers until the blood ran down his temples, and then innocent, and pronounced ſo by his judge, nevertheleſs given up to the rage of his people—to the floods of ungodly men that went about to devour him. They thirſted for his blood, and ſhed it as if it had been water. Having gotten him into their power, they led him out, marking the way as he went with his blood, and having reached mount Calvary, there they prepare their inſtruments of death. They drive the nails through his hands and feet, faſtening his body to the croſs, and then lifting up the croſs, they ſtand by to inſult

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and blaſpheme him. O love divine, how triumphantly didſt thou riſe above all theſe floods of oppoſition, when that ſweet prayer came out of thy dying mouth, "Father, forgive them, for "they know not what they do." But he had another flood of oppoſition to withſtand, infinitely more dreadful than the former; he had the wrath and juſtice of his Father to ſuſtain, who finding all our ſins upon him, took full ſatisfaction, even to the uttermoſt farthing. His Father had before declared by a voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am "well pleaſed:" but now his juſtice draws the ſword in wrath upon his beloved Son. Whence was this? What! is there any variableneſs or ſhadow of turning in God? No. He was ſtill th beloved Son of the Father, but he was made ſin for us who knew no ſin: he was wounded for our tranſgreſſions, and was bruiſed for our iniquities; he bore our griefs and carried our ſorrows, from the time he ſweat as it were great drops of blood in the garden, until he expired upon the croſs. And what he endured while that ſcripture was fulfilling, "Awake, O ſword, "againſt my ſhepherd, and againſt the man that "is my fellow, ſaith the Lord," and juſtice was taking full and perfect ſatisfaction for ſin upon him, no tongue can tell, no imagination can conceive. He ſays himſelf, "All thy waves and "ſtorms are gone over me." They broke upon his

his head, and with ſo much fury, that he complains in the 88th Pſalm, ver. 7. "Thine indig-"nation lieth hard upon me, and thou haſt "vexed me with all thy ſtorms." When all the waves and ſtorms of the Father's wrath, which ſhould have fallen upon us, vexed him, he might well ſay, "Was there ever ſorrow like unto my "ſorrow, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted "me in the day of his fierce anger?" There never was any ſorrow like that, which occaſioned this lamentation, "My God, my God, why haſt "thou forſaken me?" All the powers in heaven and earth heard this cry, and were affected with it---the ſun hid his face---there was darkneſs over the whole earth---the rocks were rent---the graves opened---the dead aroſe---the veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom. What the bleeding Lamb of God ſuffered at this time ſurpaſſeth human underſtanding. But however, in this day of the Lord's fierce anger, the floods of divine wrath did not drown our Lord's love. He bore up under all, until love heard the happy words---"It is finiſhed," and then he bowed his head, and gave up the ghoſt. But his love did not die. No. It gained the greateſt victory in death. We read of Samſon, that the dead, whom he ſlew at his death, were more than thoſe whom he ſlew in his life---which was a type and figure of the great victory, which Chriſt obtained by his death; for he then vanquiſhed

quiſhed all the enemies of our peace. His love was ſtronger than death: becauſe through death he overcame death, and him that had the power of death. It was ſtronger than the grave, for he redeemed his own body before it had ſeen corruption. And he aroſe from the grave as the firſt fruits of the dead, and behold he has in his hands the keys of hell and of death, ſo that neither death nor hell ſhall have any power over them that believe in him. And being riſen from the dead, and aſcended into heaven, he is ſeated upon the throne of glory, and he neither wants love nor power to beſtow upon them that believe in him, every grace, and every bleſſing which can make them happy in time and in eternity.

Surely then, the love of Chriſt is beyond all value. What price can you ſet upon it? Might not the faithful with good reaſon ſay of it in the text, "If a man would give all the ſubſtance of "his houſe for this love, it would utterly be "deſpiſed," for it is a free love, it cannot be bought. It is ineſtimable, and the riches of it are unſearchable. With what can you think of purchaſing it? With the ſubſtance of a man's houſe? Why, it is one of the free gifts of this love, and can you then think of meriting or buying it with its own gifts? This love created all things that are in heaven and that are in earth, ſo that you have nothing to offer it but what is already its own. And if you are one of the

Lord's

Lord's people, it redeemed you from the bondage of ſin and ſatan, of death and the grave, and you have only to receive its bleſſings, and to be thankful: for you yourſelf, and all that you have, are not your own. You are bought with a price. And what can you offer the Lord, but what is already his own? His by right of creation, by right of redemption doubly his. And muſt he not then utterly deſpiſe both you and your gifts, if you think that the ſubſtance of your houſe is to be compared with his love? He will deſpiſe you, and you will feel his reſentment through the ages of eternity, if you diſparage his love ſo much, as to think that any thing in the world, yea the whole world itſelf, ought to be put in competition with his love. They who have taſted of it, know it to be invaluable. The leaſt experience of it is worth thouſands of worlds. And Oh that he who has it to give may now ſhed it abroad in all your hearts, that you may feel the happineſs of it. May this be the deſire of every ſoul here preſent--Set me, Lord Jeſus, as a ſeal upon thine heart, ſet me as a ſeal upon thine arm, for thy love to ſinners is ſtrong as death, the ardor of it is mightier than the grave—it burnt like bright coals of fire, which hath a moſt vehement flame, many waters could not quench thy love, nor could the floods drown it. If a man would give all the ſubſtance of his houſe to purchaſe thy love, he and his gifts would be utterly deſpiſed.

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My brethren, can you make uſe of this prayer? Are theſe the pious breathings of your ſouls? You have heard from the ſenſe of the words, that theſe were the pious breathings of the faithful under the Old Teſtament, and they muſt be yours under the New, if you would experience the comforts of the doctrince in the text, and to ſtir you up to ſeek them is the ſubject of my ſecond general head: under which I ſhall make two or three ſhort practical inferences.

The firſt relates to the manner, in which the words are drawn up. They are in the form of a prayer, founded upon paſt experience of Chriſt's love, and earneſtly deſiring a larger ſhare of it. And is this your heart's deſire? Can you willingly and heartily pray to have the love of other objects ſhut out of your hearts, and to find your happineſs in the love of Chriſt, and in being ſealed for his? If you can pray thus, may you daily find more reaſon to love Jeſus Chriſt. But if you cannot, is it not expedient that you ſhould conſider what is the reaſon? For has not Jeſus Chriſt every perfection in himſelf, and every grace and bleſſing to give, which ought to draw the affections of miſerable ſinners unto himſelf? And yet you have no love for him. What is the cauſe, which makes you act ſo directly againſt your own intereſt? Is it not an unlawful attachment to the world, or to ſome object in it, which you ſet up againſt Chriſt? You prefer it to him.

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You think it can make you happier than he can, and ſo you give up your hearts to its ſervice. Herein you are guilty of a monſtrous abſurdity? becauſe you prefer creature-comforts to God; and you are guilty of monſtrous wickedneſs, becauſe you leave God to idolize the creature. And though after daily experience you find, that the creature cannot make you happy, yet ſtill you idolize it. What prodigious power muſt ſin have over a man, how entirely muſt it have blinded his underſtanding, when it can make him act againſt the cleareſt evidence, even of his own ſenſes? for upon whatever object you place your hearts, in preference, or in oppoſition to Chriſt, it cannot make you happy: for this plain reaſon, becauſe you ſin in giving that love to it, which is due to him. "My ſon, ſays he, give "ME thy heart." I will make thee happy by taking guilt out of thy conſcience, by pardoning thee freely, and ſhedding the love of God abroad in thy heart. Until this be done, no creature can make you happy. While ſin is unpardoned, while guilt is in the conſcience, and while the broken law condemns, what can money, what can pleaſure, what can honour give of happineſs? They may for a time ſooth the uneaſineſs of the mind, but they cannot remove it. Nothing can remove it, but Jeſus Chriſt. He has perfect peace to give. And if ever you obtain it, you muſt receive it from his free love and bounty.

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My brethren, do you give your aſſent to theſe truths? How do they appear to you? Do they not carry conviction along with them? Certainly they do, unleſs men be entirely blinded with ſin. If they have convinced you, and you begin to deſire to know the love of Chriſt, then turn from ſeeking happineſs in creature-comforts, where it cannot be found, and ſeek it in Jeſus Chriſt, and you will find in him true ſolid bliſs, when he ſets you as a ſeal upon his heart, and as a ſeal upon his arm. But if you have not been convinced from what has been ſaid, then turn to the world, and get its ſeal upon your hearts. If the world can make you happier than God can, idolize it. Serve it, as too many do, with every faculty of ſoul and body, and pay it that obedience which is due to God only. But did you ever conſider, who is the god of this world, that ruleth in the children of diſobedience? Is it not that old ſerpent, called the devil and ſatan, who deceiveth the whole world? And what! would you be found, when you come to die, with the devil's ſeal upon you? Do you now deliberately chooſe to be marked for his, and to have your portion with him in the lake that burneth with fire and brimſtone for ever and ever? If there be any of you thus far deluded and infatuated, let me entreat you to read the 9th chapter of Ezekiel. You will there find a lively image of your preſent ſtate; I pray God to make it the means of

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ſhewing your danger. The Lord gives a command to ſlay young and old, and to deſtroy the whole city; but firſt one cloathed in linen goes to ſet a mark upon the Lord's people, and they only were to be ſaved. You have not the Lord's mark upon you, therefore in the day of his fierce anger his eye will not ſpare, neither will he have pity. Whenever the deſtroying angel is ſent out, he has no power to hurt the ſervants of God, who are ſealed; as you may read, Rev. vii. Four angels had a commiſſion to hurt the earth, and the ſea, but they were not to execute it until the Lord's people were ſealed, then they were to deſtroy and ſpare not. Are not theſe awful ſcriptures? Have not they made you ſenſible of your preſent danger? May the Spirit of the living God apply them. Oh may his grace now begin to work upon your hearts! Now may he put it into your minds from a due ſenſe of your wants to ſeek a ſupply from the love of Chriſt, that you may receive profit from what I have to remark upon the ſecond part of the text, viz. the greatneſs of Chriſt's love.

But of this you can form no judgment, unleſs you have ſeen your guilt and your miſery, and found how much you ſtood in need of his love. It will appear great in proportion, as you find your want of it, and greater as you experience it. In itſelf it is divine and infinite. It partakes of the nature of its author. It is, like him,

above all bleſſing and praiſe. If you try to take the dimenſions of it, you will conclude with the apoſtle, that it ſurpaſſeth knowledge, yea, the knowledge of angels as well as of men; the height, the depth, the length, the breadth of it cannot be meaſured by any created being. Oh the height and depth of that love, which brought our divine Lord from the higheſt heavens to the loweſt humiliation. Oh the length of that love which reaches as far as the eaſt is from the weſt, for ſo far hath he ſet our ſins from us. Oh the breadth of it, which includes a great multitude, that no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues. But although Chriſt's love be thus unſpeakably great, and inconceivably divine, yet until you feel the miſery of ſin, you will not think of applying to Chriſt for his love. But when guilt torments, death terrifies, the grave and hell appear to you in all their horrors, then you will think it a bleſſing indeed, if you could have that love in your hearts, which is able to caſt out theſe fears. And the knowledge of Chriſt's love to you caſteth out all fear: for his love has conquered all your enemies, and is now almighty to conquer them in you. For ſin he has made an atonement, death he has ſubdued, and him that had the power of death, he is riſen from the grave as the firſt fruits of the dead, and has opened the gate of everlaſting life. O beſeech

him

him then to let you ſhare in that love, which was ſtronger than death, mightier than the grave; whereby all his conqueſts ſhall be yours. When you are united to him in the bonds of love, he will make you more than conqueror. He will make your love triumphant like his. He will ſo ſtrengthen it, that many waters ſhall not be able to quench it, neither ſhall the floods be able to drown it. Neither diſtreſs nor perſecution, neither life nor death, neither the pleaſures of the world, nor the temptations of the devil, ſhall be able to ſeparate you from the love of Chriſt Jeſus your Lord.

If you ſee your want of this love, ſeek and you ſhall find it. The promiſe is—"They that "ſeek me early ſhall find me." And if any of you have been ſeeking and have not found, you may conclude, that you have been ſeeking wrong —and have not followed the laſt part of the text, viz. ſeeking it as a free gift, which with all your endeavours and pains you cannot merit: for ſuch is the free and ineſtimable love of Chriſt, that if a man would give all the ſubſtance of his houſe for this love it would utterly be deſpiſed. If you had millions of worlds to give, they would be counted as nothing. He would reject you and your worthleſs bribes—As one ſaid upon a like occaſion, "Thy money periſh "with thee, becauſe thou haſt thought, that "the free gift of God was to be purchaſed "with money." Not only all that thou haſt,

but alſo all that thou canſt deſire, is not to be compared with the love of Chriſt. Whatever can make the ſinner happy in time, whatever can make him bleſſed in eternity, Chriſt's love is able to beſtow, and does beſtow upon thoſe, who find their want of it, and who come humbled under a ſenſe of their wants, to aſk it as a matter of free grace and bounty. It is to the glory of his love, that he beſtows upon the unworthy. And if his good Spirit has enabled you to ſee your want of it, and you can aſk it as an unworthy ſinner, you will receive it. This is your only qualification, to acknowledge that you do not deſerve it. Go to the throne of his grace with this humble temper, hungering and thirſting after righteouſneſs, and the Lord Jeſus will ſend you away filled with good things.

It is evident then from what has been ſaid, that there is perfect happineſs to be found in the love of our redeeming God. All that call themſelves chriſtians profeſs their belief of this truth, but the generality of them act in direct oppoſition to their belief, and are ſeeking happineſs where God has decreed it ſhall not be found. They try to find it in the world, but are diſappointed, and after many diſappointments they will not give over the ſearch. Their great love for the world will not ſuffer them to turn their backs upon it, although it has deceived them ſo often. They are quite enamoured with its fancied

goods, and place their whole hearts and affections upon its money, its pleaſures, and its honours: theſe they purſue eagerly, and perhaps attain them; they have their heart's deſire, and yet they are unhappy. What is the reaſon? Becauſe theſe things cannot ſatisfy the wants of a ſinful ſoul. Sin ſeparated the ſoul from God; not only ſet them at a diſtance from each other, but alſo occaſioned enmity between them. The law and juſtice of God are of purer eyes than to behold the leaſt ſin, and therefore he revealed his wrath from heaven againſt all unrighteouſneſs and ungodlineſs of men. And until his law and juſtice receive full ſatisfaction, God the Father will not appear reconciled, nor pardon the ſinner, who cannot return to God with any love or confidence, and find happineſs in him, until he believe that God is reconciled, and has pardoned him. Now Jeſus Chriſt is the only Saviour who has pardon of ſin to give. His good Spirit can give the ſinner the knowledge of the pardon of ſin, and ſhed abroad in his heart all the comforts of God's pardoning love. Then he will know the truth of the deſcription in the text. Chriſt's love will appear to him as it is there deſcribed. He will be able to take up the words, and to uſe them with the ſame ſpirit, with which they were ſpoken in the Song: for he is happy in the love of Chriſt, and can truly ſay, "I love him, be-"cauſe he firſt loved me, and gave himſelf for "me."

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Since these things are so, surely, my beloved brethren, you will not go away resolved, still to seek happiness in the love of creature-comforts. You cannot suppose, that the world can make you happier than its almighty Creator and Saviour can. If you had it all in your possession, yet there are times when it could be of no service. What pleasure could it give you in sickness? How could it remove the torments of a guilty conscience? How could it keep off death, or take out its sting? How could it bring you any comfort, if your poor soul should appear with all its sins unpardoned at the judgment-seat of Christ? Alas, in these circumstances the world and the things of it cannot give relief. You know they cannot. And why then will you pursue them? Since there is no happiness to be found in them, and the more you pursue them, the farther will they lead you from true happiness. Oh, turn from the world then, leave it, follow its vain shadows no longer, nor disquiet yourselves in vain. No man was ever happy in the love of the world; but every man is happier than the world can make him, who has only accepted the invitation, "Oh come, taste and see how "gracious the Lord Jesus is;" but he that has tasted, and seen, and is under the care and protection of Christ's love, he is completely happy, even in times of trial and trouble; because Christ is almighty to deliver; and when he does not

deliver from affliction, he is able to ſanctify it, and to make it work together for good to them that love him. And is not this an happy ſtate? What ſinner would not deſire it, and what afflicted perſon would not pray for it? May he, who is able to bring you into it, put it into all your hearts to ſeek it. Oh that he may ſend his good Spirit, and give every one of you earneſt deſires to have this ſcripture fulfilled in your own ſouls. May this be the language of every ſoul here preſent—Set me, bleſſed Saviour, as a ſeal upon thine heart, and as a ſeal upon thine arm, let thy love and thy power act together for my ſalvation: for thy love is mightier than death, and ſtronger than the grave, Oh that I might ſhare in theſe victories of thy love, the vehement ardor of which many waters could not quench, neither could the floods drown it. If a man would give all the ſubſtance of his houſe to buy this love it would utterly be contemned. I have nothing to purchaſe it with. Give it to me Lord, as a free gift, and to the glory of the giver.

O dear Redeemer, ſend us away with theſe good deſires in all our hearts, and cheriſh them, until we know that love of thine, which paſſeth knowledge, which exceeds all that can be ſaid of it upon earth, and will exceed all that can be ſaid of it in heaven. There will be no end of ſinging its praiſes through eternity. Oh may it be your joy and happineſs here in time to ſing with

with grateful hearts the praiſes of redeeming love, until Jeſus take you to himſelf, and put more love into your hearts, and fill your mouths with louder ſongs of praiſe to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the adorable Trinity in Unity, to whom may we all aſcribe equal honour and glory, majeſty and dominion, now, henceforth, and for evermore. *Amen* and *Amen*.

SERMON XII.

CHAP. viii. VER. 14.

Make haſte, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe, or to a young hart upon the mountains of ſpices.

THE church makes this her laſt requeſt. She deſires her beloved to haſten his coming, which under the Old Teſtament diſpenſation referred to his coming in the fleſh, as under the New, it refers to his ſecond coming. But the church of God, both in the Old Teſtament and the New, expected another coming of Chriſt, viz. his coming in grace. The believers knew that he was to come, and to abide with them, and not as a ſojourner, but as an inhabitant, to dwell in their hearts by faith. This was promiſed them, and this they have always experienced. The words may with great propriety treat of theſe three advents of our Lord. And I will endeavour

Firſt, To explain them in their full ſenſe, and then

Secondly, To draw ſome practical obſervations from them.

The words were ſpoken before the coming of Chriſt in the fleſh, and ſuppoſing they refer to it, they

they imply great haſte and ſpeed. The faithful would have Chriſt to haſten his coming in the ſwifteſt manner, whereby they expreſs the holy impatience of their affections, which could not endure delay. They longed to ſee the deſire of all nations incarnate. It was their continual wiſh and prayer, that they might ſee the day of Chriſt. Therefore upon the concluſion of the Song, they break off as it were abruptly, with this their laſt requeſt, upon which their hearts were principally ſet, "make haſte, my beloved."

This was the continual prayer of believers under the Old Teſtament, which they made not from any doubt of God's faithfulneſs and truth, but from their earneſt deſires after the Saviour of the world. They were ſenſibly convinced of their great want of him. They found ſin in themſelves—they read in the law of the puniſhment due to ſin, which the law had threatened, and juſtice was bound to inflict, and they knew that they could do nothing to make an atonement to law and juſtice, therefore they ardently prayed for the coming of the promiſed Lamb of God who was to take away ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf, and to anſwer all the demands of law and juſtice. The firſt prophecy was ſufficiently clear to be a ground for their prayers. God had declared, that the ſeed of the woman, one born of a woman, ſhould bruiſe the ſerpent's head, in which his poiſon lay, and thereby deſtroy the power

power which he had uſurped over mankind. The types and ſervices then inſtituted, which are in ſum and ſubſtance the ſame that were afterwards recorded in the written law, tended to explain the firſt prophecy, and to keep it continually in remembrance. They ſerved as a ſchool-maſter to lead men to Chriſt. From them it was certain that the Saviour would come and be made a ſacrifice for ſin, but the preciſe time of his coming was not made known in the firſt ages of the world. This gave men occaſion to expect him in every age, until the fixed time of his coming was revealed. And accordingly we find the patriarchs before, and the prophets under the law, waiting with eager deſires for his coming: As our Lord aſſured his apoſtles, Matt. xiii. 17. "Verily I ſay unto you, many "prophets and righteous men have deſired to "ſee theſe things which ye ſee and have not "ſeen them, and to hear theſe things which ye "hear and have not heard them." There were many prophets and righteous men in the church of God as well before the written law as ſince, who deſired to ſee God incarnate, and to hear the gracious words that ſhould proceed out of his mouth. Jacob was one of theſe prophets and righteous men, and he expreſſes all their deſires in his own—"I have waited for thy ſalvation, "O Lord." (Gen. xlix. 18.) And the prophet Iſaiah, ſpeaking in his own name, and in the

name

name of the faithful, ſays,—" In the way of thy " judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee: " the deſire of our ſoul is to thy name, and to " the remembrance of thee." And there were always in the church ſome waiting for the promiſed conſolation of Iſrael, and eſpecially at the time of his appearing in the fleſh, ſuch as the juſt and devout Simeon, who when the holy child Jeſus was brought into the temple, took him up in his arms, and bleſſed God, and ſaid, " Lord, now letteſt thou thy ſervant depart in " peace, for mine eyes have ſeen thy ſalvation." And this, my brethren, will be your happy caſe, when your eyes ſee the ſalvation of God. When faith gives you a clear view of your intereſt in the ſalvation of Jeſus Chriſt, then whenever you die you will depart in peace.

Thus the Old Teſtament ſaints deſired Chriſt to haſten his coming in the fleſh. They wanted to behold his day. They longed to ſee the great myſtery of godlineſs opened and explained—God manifeſt in the fleſh. In the fulneſs of time, according to their deſires he came. He viſited us in great humility, and in the form of a ſervant, but he thought it not robbery to be equal with God: for he required the ſame faith in himſelf as in the Father, " Ye believe in God, believe " alſo in me." John xiv. 1. He commanded the ſame divine honour to be paid to him, " All " men ſhould honour the Son, even as they " honour

" honour the Father," (John v. 23.) for he is Jehovah, the ſelf-exiſtent God (John viii. 24.) which whoever does not believe ſhall die in his ſins. He ſupported theſe high claims by appealing to his miracles, which were God's teſtimony to the truth of his words. Hear his own argument upon this very ſubject. The Jews were going to ſtone him for ſaying that he was God. " If I do not the works of my Father believe " me not; but if I do, though ye believe not " me, believe the works, that ye may know and " believe that the Father is in me, and I in him." (John x. 37, 38.) He did all the works, which the prophets had foretold the promiſed Immanuel ſhould perform. And after he had fulfilled the ſcriptures of the Old Teſtament, had ſuffered all that law and juſtice required, and had compleated the great work of ſalvation, he aſcended into heaven, and ſat down at the right hand of the majeſty on high. And we are now according to his moſt true promiſe waiting for his ſecond coming. There is a great day, and not far off, when every eye ſhall ſee him coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. God had revealed this very early to his ſervants the prophets: for Enoch the ſeventh from Adam prophecied of it, ſaying, " Behold " the Lord cometh with ten thouſand of his " ſaints to execute judgment upon all, and to " convince all that are ungodly among them,

" of

" of all their ungodly deeds, which they have " ungodly committed, and of all their hard " ſpeeches, which ungodly ſinners have ſpoken " againſt him." In the New Teſtament we have the manner of our Lord's coming to execute judgment, with the proceſs of the laſt day very particularly deſcribed. And it is the wiſh and prayer of every faithful ſoul—that he would haſten this his glorious appearing, and accompliſh the great things which are to go before it. When the bleſſed Jeſus cloſes the volume of revelation with this promiſe, " Surely I come " quickly," the faithful reply, " *Amen.* Even " ſo come, Lord Jeſus." And daily is it in their prayers—Thy kingdom come. And they have good reaſon to deſire it; becauſe all that their Lord and Saviour has to do upon the earth will then be compleated. The number of the elect will be perfected, and he will be admired in them. His enemies will be finally ſubdued. An end will be put to the reign of ſin and ſatan. There will be no more death. Whatever robbed our redeeming God of his glory will be deſtroyed. Oh how greatly then is this ſecond coming of our Lord to be deſired by all his faithful followers and ſervants, who are deſcribed in ſcripture by this character, that they love his appearing. They love it firſt for his ſake, becauſe he will then be glorified in his ſaints, he will then be glorified for the great glory which he will beſtow

upon them; and they love it alſo for their own ſakes, becauſe then all their wiſhes and deſires will be fulfilled, when they ſhall ſee their beloved Saviour face to face. They will have no more prayers or requeſts to make. When that great day is come, there will be no more complaints, no more wants or neceſſities, ſorrow and ſighing will flee away for ever. Our warfare will be ended, our victory compleated. Our crowns ſhall ſhine upon our heads with never-fading luſtre, our palms of victory ſhall be ever green. How exceedingly great this happineſs will be we cannot fully comprehend at preſent. However this one circumſtance heightens every thing ſaid of it in ſcripture, namely, that it will be eternal. When we have aſcended from judgment with our Lord, he will admit us into his kingdom of glory. After this meeting we ſhall part no more; but ſhall ever be with the Lord, praiſing and adoring his perfections, and being happy in the enjoyment of them to all eternity. And is not all this happineſs earneſtly to be deſired by them, who have received through faith the earneſt of their inheritance? And will it not be much upon their hearts to pray him to haſten his coming, and will not they, who love his appearing, pray for it with great fervency? Our church is very earneſt in her prayers: for ſhe teaches us in the Burial Service to be continually praying to him, "that it would pleaſe

"him,

" him, of his gracious, goodneſs ſhortly to ac-
" compliſh the number of his elect, and to
" haſten his kingdom." And he has promiſed to hear and to anſwer theſe prayers: for when he is deſcribing in St. Matthew the tribulation of the laſt days, which ſhall be greater than any ſince the beginning of the world to that time, he ſays that " for the elects ſake theſe
" days ſhall be ſhortened." Amen. So be it Lord Jeſus.

My brethren, when you hear of our Lord's ſecond coming how does it affect you? Do you love to think of the day of his great glory? Do you wiſh and pray for it? Does the ſolemnity of it ſtrike no terror into your conſciences? Is all peace and joy within, when you hear of the ſuddenneſs of his coming, and of the general ſurprize it will be to a careleſs world? Do you now find no fear, if the laſt trump ſhould this moment ſound and you ſhould lift up your eyes and ſee the God of glory coming in the clouds of heaven attended with all his holy angels? Could you look up with joy, knowing that your redemption draweth nigh? Is your conſcience ſo purged from dead works that it would not be alarmed, if the air that we breathe being on fire ſhould be diſſolved, and the elements ſhould melt with fervent heat, and the earth alſo and the works that are therein ſhould be burnt up? Are you prepared to draw near the judgment-

ſeat

ſeat with a true heart in full aſſurance of faith, having your hearts ſprinkled from an evil conſcience? When you meditate upon the ſolemn proceſs of the laſt day, as deſcribed by the Judge himſelf, can you ſuppoſe yourſelf to be in the midſt of this awful ſcene, and your ſtate ready to be determined to all eternity, and have you no fearful apprehenſions about your ſalvation? If you have none, may he who delivered you from them ſtrengthen and eſtabliſh your faith that you may daily love our Lord, and love his appearing more and more. But if guilty fear does ariſe in your heart, when you think of the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour at the laſt day, this proves that all is not right in your own ſoul. There is a coming of Chriſt in grace, which you have not yet experienced: for if you had, it would have given you that love, which caſteth out all tormenting fear. If Chriſt had come and manifeſted himſelf to you, as your Saviour, if he had awakened you, had pardoned you freely, and given you the witneſs of the Spirit in your heart, enabling you to look upon God as your reconciled Father, Chriſt as your Saviour, and the Holy Spirit as your guide and comforter, then you could have no reaſon to fear. And this coming of Chriſt is the moſt to be deſired, becauſe without this you do not receive the graces and bleſſings of his firſt coming in the fleſh, and therefore are not prepared for his ſecond

cond coming to judgment. What he did and ſuffered in the fleſh is not imputed unto us for righteouſneſs, until it be applied and appropriated. The Holy Spirit muſt come and ſhew us our intereſt in it, he muſt give us preſent ſalvation from the pollution, and the guilt, and the dominion of ſin, and we muſt know and experience this by true faith, before the fear of Chriſt's coming to judgment can be taken out of the conſcience. But when Chriſt thus dwells in the heart by faith, then being intereſted in all the graces of his firſt coming, we may wait for the bleſſings of his ſecond coming with hopes full of imortality. Therefore,

My brethren, above all things ſeek the experience of Chriſt's coming to you in grace: for when you once know and love him as your Saviour, you cannot fear him as your judge: but from the ſenſe of his love to you, you will be able with the faithful in the text to call him your beloved, and to pray for his ſpeedy coming, that he may put all his enemies under his feet. When they ſay, "Make haſte my beloved," this implies that there was mutual love between them. The ſoul was made ſenſible of Chriſt's love to it: "For we love him," ſays the apoſtle John, "becauſe he firſt loved us." And when you have ſcripture evidence of his firſt loving you, then you can with true faith take up the churches words, and ſay, "My beloved is mine, and I

"am

" am his." To know that he is yours is the ſame thing as to know whatever he has is yours: for by being intereſted in him you have a property in all his promiſes, graces, and bleſſings, in time and in eternity. This is the bleſſed ſtate of believers; and do you not deſire, my brethren, to be in it? is it not happineſs indeed to be freed from the fear of death and judgment—nay more, to be able to pray for the coming of Chriſt, and to love his appearing? What can be more deſirable than to know that the almighty judge is your loving Saviour, who, when he comes at the laſt day, will make you completely bleſſed both in body and ſoul? May God put it into all your hearts to deſire this, and may he give you faith to pray in the words of the text—" Make " haſte, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe " or a young hart,"—like them in ſwiftneſs and ſpeed, for which they are remarkable. It is ſaid of Aſahel the ſon of Zeruiah, that he was light as of foot as a wild roe; and the Gadites, who came to David at Ziglag, are celebrated for being as ſwift as roes upon the mountains. With all this ſpeed would the faithful have Chriſt to haſten his coming. They had no ſtronger idea of the greateſt ſpeed than what they took from the ſwiftneſs of a wild roe, and therefore by this they expreſs the fervent deſires of their ſouls after his ſpeedy coming. He heard their prayers, and he will anſwer them. He gave them many promiſes

miſes in the Old Teſtament of his coming in glory to judge the world, and many more in the New. In his laſt words, with which he ſhuts up the volume of revelation, he leaves us this ſweet and comfortable promiſe—" Surely I come " quickly." Here we have his promiſe, he will come quickly, and confirmed by a ſolemn aſſeveration, ſurely—and ſurely, what his truth hath promiſed, nothing ſhall be able to hinder his omnipotence from fulfilling: for yet a little while, and he that ſhall come will come, and will not tarry. And becauſe he ſeems to tarry, therefore the unbeliever takes occaſion to reflect upon the faithfulneſs of God, and the careleſs ſinner ſinks deeper into carnal ſecurity; but both theſe ſorts of perſons may read their condemnation in the third chapter of the ſecond Epiſtle of Peter, in which he foretells that there ſhould come in the laſt days ſcoffers, walking after their own luſts and ſaying, Where is the promiſe of his coming? We ſee no ſigns of it, for ſince the fathers fell aſleep all things go on as they did from the beginning of the creation. To this the apoſtle replies, firſt by ſaying, it is wilful ignorance to maintain, that the world has ſuffered no change ſince the creation, for was it not once deſtroyed by a deluge of water? And ſecondly he anſwers, that the Lord is not ſlack concerning his promiſe (as ſome men count ſlackneſs) but is long ſuffering to us ward, not willing that

any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to repentance. What theſe men call ſlackneſs is an act of mercy. The judge only waits till the time fixed in the counſel of God be finiſhed, till the number of the elect be perfected, and then ſhall the end come. His delay may ſeem long to us who meaſure time by days, and months, and years, but with the Lord a thouſand years are but as one day. There is no time in eternity. What ſeems long to us, who are but of yeſterday, is with the Lord ſpeedy: for he that is truth, and cannot lie, ſays, Surely I come quickly. The longer he has delayed, the ſooner he will come, and therefore my brethren, you ſhould be the more prepared. If you think his delay long, this ſhould haſten you in your preparation, becauſe every moment brings his coming nearer. No one dare affirm that he ſhall not live to ſee the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. If this may be, and every one of us may live to ſee it come to paſs, Oh what manner of perſons ought we to be in all holy converſation and godlineſs? What diligence ſhould we give to make our calling and election ſure? Ought we not to have a clear knowledge of our intereſt in the judge, and to be aſſured by faith of his being our Saviour, that we may love his appearing, and pray for it, as the faithful did in the text. They finiſhed their prayer, and cloſed the book with

intreating him to come ſpeedily, and to give them more experience of his love; they deſired to have daily more proofs of his being their compleat Saviour, by his acting in each of his anointed offices for them and for their ſalvation, as their prophet, their prieſt and their king. This is I think the meaning of the laſt words—"Upon "the mountains of ſpices." In our language we apply the word mountain to the higheſt hills, and we generally fix the idea of barrenneſs to it. But the ſcripture applies it to hills, of no great height, and to the moſt fruitful hills, ſuch as Carmel, and Sharon, and Gilead, upon which grew the ſpices here mentioned. In the 30th of Exodus we have a particular deſcription of theſe aromatic ſpices. Moſes was commanded to take myrrh, cinnamon, ſweet calamus, and caſſia, and to mix them up with oil olive, to make a compoſition that would diffuſe its fragrant odours without the help of fire. The uſe of this holy ointment was to anoint the tabernacle itſelf, and all its veſſels, that they might be holy unto the Lord—And it was able to conſecrate the high prieſt, that he might miniſter in holy things. And it was ſtrictly forbidden in the law to uſe it to any other purpoſe, upon the penalty of death. This holy anointing was to repreſent what was to be in Chriſt, and what was to flow to us from him. It was the type and figure of the anointing of the Holy Spirit, which was poured

upon him without meaſure, to conſecrate him to the high offices of prophet, prieſt, and king, over the people of God. He is their prophet to enlighten the blindneſs of their underſtanding, and to lead them into all ſaving truth, their prieſt to take away the pollution and guilt of ſin, and their king to deſtroy in them the dominion of ſin, and to carry on the divine life in their ſouls here in grace, and hereafter in glory. The faithful in the Old Teſtament expected him in theſe gracious offices, for which he was to be qualified by the unction from the holy one, and therefore they made it a matter of their prayers that he would haſten his coming in his three office characters, which they expreſs by that holy anointing, whereby he was conſtituted and ordained to theſe offices.

The meaning of the words from what has been ſaid appears to be this. The faithful finiſh this ſweet portion of ſcripture with a prayer. They had experienced ſo much of Chriſt's love, that their hearts were entirely ſet upon further communion, and therefore they beg of him to haſten his coming; in the Old Teſtament they mean his coming in the fleſh, in the New we mean his coming to judgment; but both to them and us there is another coming. Chriſt muſt come and dwell in our hearts by faith, that we may receive the benefits of his firſt coming in the fleſh, and be prepared for his ſecond coming

ing in glory: for until we have by faith a clear view of our intereſt in him, how can we take up the words of the text and ſay—Make haſte, O thou beloved Jeſus, and for the elects ſake ſhorten theſe days of ſin and blaſphemy. Why is thy chariot ſo long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of thy chariot? Oh come with all the ſwiftneſs of the fleeteſt roe, or wild deer, to fulfil whatever remains of ſcripture not compleated, eſpecially come to fulfil what is written of the ſacred offices, to which thou waſt anointed, and by which thou art to make us an odour of a ſweet ſmell, a ſacrifice acceptable, well-pleaſing unto God. Thus come, Lord Jeſus, as our prophet and prieſt, and ſet up thy kingdom of grace in every one of our hearts, that we may love thy appearing, and pray thee to haſten thy kingdom of glory.

Upon this ſtate of the doctrine there are two practical truths offered to our ſerious conſideration.

Firſt, The prayer for Chriſt's coming. And

Secondly, The reaſon upon which the prayer was grounded.

And Firſt, As to his coming at the laſt day, it is as certain, as that he came in the fleſh in the fulneſs of time. From the certainty of the fact the faithful were led to pray for it. And can you, my brethren, join in their prayer? Do you deſire from your hearts that Chriſt ſhould

ſoon come in all his glory to judgment? Are you preparing and looking out for it as an event that may not be far off? If you are, then you are ſafe. But if you are not, examine carefully what is the reaſon. Why cannot you pray along with the faithful for Chriſt's ſpeedy coming to judgment? Surely you don't doubt of the fact? That he will come to judge the world is as certain as that he did come at the fixt time to judge the Jewiſh nation: "For we muſt all appear before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt." The matter of fact upon ſcripture principles is undeniably clear and certain. Why then are you not ſo prepared for it as to make it the ſubject of your prayers? Is it becauſe you put it at a great diſtance, and therefore think yourſelves ſafe? Conſider attentively what the ſcripture ſays upon this point. Our Lord has given us ſeveral marks and ſigns of his coming, by which we might know as certainly, when it was at hand, as we could know, when the fig-tree puts forth her green figs, that ſummer is nigh. There were to be wars and rumours of wars, peſtilences, earthquakes in divers places, very little true faith left upon the earth, and yet as great ſecurity among careleſs ſinners as there was in the days of Noah, when the flood came and ſwept them all away. Do you think theſe cannot be the forerunners of our Lord's ſpeedy coming, becauſe there always have been ſuch things

things in the world? But when all these signs are at once upon the earth, and in a manner they never were before, then they become loud calls to an immediate preparation. Were there ever greater wars, or more rumours of war? Has not an uncommon pestilence raged among the cattle for several years, in this and in other countries? Were there ever such earthquakes, so universal, and of so long continuance, as have been for some years past? And does not the present state of the world as to religion greatly resemble our Lord's description of the men, upon whom that day shall come unawares as a thief in the night? And when could the account which St. Paul gives us in several of his epistles, of the men of the latter times be more true, than it is at present? Have they not the name and form of christianity without the power of it? Are they not worldly-minded, sunk into carnal security, and so entirely influenced by the love of pleasure, that the love of God, and of the things of God, is not only waxed cold, but quite frozen up? Was there ever any age, wherein our Lord's words could be more strictly fulfilled, "When the Son of Man cometh shall he "find faith upon the earth?" By these signs our Lord is alarming a sinful world with notices of his speedy coming, and if sinners are not at all alarmed, but continue still secure in their sins, this is a scripture proof that he will soon come as a thief

thief in the night and ſurprize them: for when they ſhall ſay, "Peace and ſafety," then ſudden deſtruction ſhall come upon them, and they ſhall not eſcape.

But ſtill you do not ſee the ſigns of his coming ſo clearly, as to be convinced of the neceſſity of being immediately prepared. If it be at all neceſſary to be prepared, it is certainly neceſſary to be prepared immediately: for you cannot be ſure at any time, that he will not come, and therefore you ſhould be at all times ready for his coming. Suppoſe he ſhould come in a day that ye look not for him, what would your eternal condition be? What, if he ſhould ſurprize you in your ſins, have you no apprehenſion about your danger? Who amongſt you could dwell with the devouring fire? Who amongſt you could dwell with the everlaſting burnings? And ſuppoſe he ſhould not come, yet if he ſend death to ſurprize you, it is the ſame thing. If you die unpardoned you are loſt for ever: for it is written, "the wicked ſhall be turned into hell, "and all the people that forget God." So that put our Lord's coming as far off as you pleaſe, yet you cannot put death off: and there is the ſame preparation neceſſary for the one as for the other. You muſt be turned from darkneſs to light, and from the power of ſatan unto God, you muſt be juſtified and ſanctified, before you are fit either to meet death or judgment. And

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if you have no knowledge of Chriſt's being your Saviour, it is the ſame thing to you as if there was no Saviour: for if you are not united by faith to Chriſt, he is no Chriſt to you, according to the ſaying of the firſt reformers. "That an "unapplied Chriſt is no Chriſt;" therefore, my beloved brethren, if you have any real love for your own ſouls, if you indeed prefer everlaſting joys to endleſs torments, ſeek for pardon and peace from the hands of Jeſus Chriſt, who has them to give, that having received them from him, you may be able with true faith to uſe the prayer in the text, and for the ſame reaſon the faithful here uſed it, namely, from your experience of your intereſt in Chriſt, which is the ſecond practical point in the text I was to apply.

They pray to Chriſt to haſten his coming; which they earneſtly requeſted, becauſe they had clear evidence of his being their loving Saviour. He firſt loved them, and made them ſenſible of his love, therefore they loved him. And having a ſure intereſt in the preſent graces of his ſalvation (for they were in poſſeſſion, and had actual enjoyment of them) they knew that they ſhould at his ſecond coming ſhare in the bleſſings of his eternal kingdom; for which reaſon they offered up to him the prayer of faith, requeſting him to come quickly—Make haſte, my beloved, and may we ſoon ſee thee manifeſt in the fleſh,

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making an atonement for ſin and bringing in everlaſting righteouſneſs, and when thou haſt by obeying, ſuffering, dying, and riſing again, fulfilled the law and the prophets, Oh haſten thy ſecond coming. Let all things be forwarded that are to go before it. Finiſh the number of thine elect, Jews and Gentiles, and then come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Now, my brethren, do you pray thus for Chriſt's ſecond coming? Can you make it, do you make it, the daily ſubject of your prayers? Being aſſured that Jeſus is your Saviour, have you no fear of him as your judge? Are you ſo entirely delivered from fear that you love his appearing, as the day of the Lord's great glory, when he will be glorified in the deſtruction of all his enemies, and glorified much more in the eternal ſalvation of all his ſaints?

Perhaps ſome of you may think, that it favours of enthuſiaſm, for a man to pretend to be ſo certain of Chriſt's love, as to pray for his coming to judgment. Let us hear then what the ſcripture ſays. The faithful in the text deſire Chriſt to make haſte, and upon this motive they ground their prayer, that he was their beloved; but they could not have urged him to make haſte for this reaſon, unleſs they had been certain of their intereſt in him. If he had not been their beloved, they could not have made their hopes of meeting him ſoon the ſubject of

their

their prayers; but every one could ſay for himſelf, "My beloved is mine and I am his," and knowing that they were his, and belonged to him, knowing this from the work of grace which was in them, from the abiding witneſs of the Spirit, and from the long and ſweet communion which they had enjoyed with their beloved Jeſus, they therefore prayed him to make haſte, to haſten his firſt and ſecond coming. And if this be enthuſiaſm, it is not peculiar to this portion of ſcripture. It runs through the whole volume as well as through the ſong. All the patriarchs, as well as Abraham, deſired to ſee Chriſt's day. Moſes prayed earneſtly for it, and was honoured with the ſight of it, as Abraham was; God ſhewed it to them in a viſion, but he did not vouchſafe the ſame to many prophets, and kings, and righteous men, although they earneſtly deſired to ſee it. The Pſalms and the prophetical writings are full of petitions to Chriſt, praying him to come to the ſalvation of his people. And the New Teſtament abounds with the like petitions. It is ſaid of believers that they love their Lord's appearing—they love it and make it the ſubject of their prayers, becauſe they know it will be an happy event for them. Daily are they looking up to him, and praying "thy kingdom come," and beſeeching him in the words of our church, "ſhortly to accom-

"pliſh

" pliſh the number of his elect, and to haſten " his kingdom."

Thus it is ſo far from being enthuſiaſm to love Chriſt's appearing, that it is one of the plain truths of ſcripture, clearly taught and ſtrongly enforced in numerous paſſages both of the Old Teſtament and of the New; and it is a doctrine received by our church, and made uſe of in her liturgy. And certainly, my brethren, you will not oppoſe a truth confirmed by ſo many proofs? This would be acting a very irrational part, and would be a clear ſign of your being under great guilt: for it would prove you to be without the leaſt ſenſe of that love which you oppoſe. If you had ever ſeen your want of that love, had ever been ſeeking it, or had ever taſted of it, you could not deny there is ſuch a thing as loving Chriſt, becauſe he firſt loved you. This is a received truth in ſcripture. In the Song it is taken for granted throughout, and in the New Teſtament it is expreſsly aſſerted. " We have known, " ſays ſome, the love that God hath to us." And another declares, " Jeſus Chriſt loved me, " and gave himſelf for me." And we may ſtill know this by the very ſame means, by which they knew it, viz. by the Holy Ghoſt's ſhedding abroad the love of God in our hearts. Until he ſhed it abroad in your hearts you cannot join the faithful in the text, and pray with them for Chriſt's coming, becauſe if you love him not,

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how can you love his appearing? You cannot call him your beloved, and therefore you have no intereſt in him. Conſider and examine whether this be a deſirable ſtate to live in, and to die in. What is it to be without Chriſt? Is it not to be aliens from the commonwealth of Iſrael, and ſtrangers from the covenants of promiſe, to have no hope, and to be without God in the world? This is the ſcripture account of your dangerous condition. And does not it alarm you? If it does, fly to Chriſt, and he will give you to taſte of his pardoning love. If it does not, may he ſend his good Spirit to convince you what it is to be without Chriſt, that you may feel the miſery of it in time, and therefore may ſeek to be happy with him in eternity.

If then the ſame ſpirit be in you, which was in the faithful in the text, you will be able to take up their words, and to ſpeak them with their faith. You will have ſuch a clear view of your intereſt in the beloved Jeſus, that the thoughts of his coming ſoon to judgment will be matter of joy and delight, and this will furniſh you with the beſt comment upon the Song. The experience of Chriſt's love makes it plain an eaſy. For he that has this love in his heart will not be much at a loſs to underſtand what is here written of it. He is not like a novice, who begins to learn the firſt principles of ſome art or ſcience, but he is a great proficient. He has been

been taught of God, and has received a practical and experimental knowledge of the ſubject of this book. It treats of the believer's happineſs in being united to Chriſt, and he is united to Chriſt, and finds himſelf happy in that union: for he knows the love which Chriſt has to his ſoul, and he has received many clear ſcripture marks and evidences of it. The Holy Spirit has ſhed abroad the love of Chriſt in his heart, and he loves Chriſt, becauſe he knows Chriſt firſt loved him. He loves God the Father, who is now his reconciled Father, and he loves and delights to do his will. He loves the Lord's day, his ordinances, his people and in ſhort he loves every thing that God loves. He has indeed in his heart that love of which this book treats, and his own experience daily opens and explains it ſo clearly, as if it had been written for his particular uſe, and was a copy of God's dealings with his ſoul. He finds that nearneſs to God, which is here deſcribed. He has much ſweet communion with him in prayer. In time of temptation, or affliction, he can go boldly to the throne of grace; faith gives him boldneſs and acceſs with confidence: for he is aſſured that whatever he aſks in his Saviour's name he ſhall receive. When he hears or reads the word he can mix faith with it, and he is enabled to grow thereby. And when he goes to the Lord's ſupper, he finds that Chriſt is ſtill preſent at his own table,

table, and makes himſelf known in breaking of bread. He finds a nearneſs to Chriſt, and enjoys ſweet fellowſhip with him in all the ordinances. He lives in his preſence, is led by his Spirit, and partakes of his comforts. In ſhort he is united to Chriſt intimately and vitally, as a member of the body is to the head, or as the branches are to the vine, or as the bread is to the eater, or as the building is to the foundation; for under theſe, and ſeveral ſuch-like images the ſcripture deſcribes the union there is between Chriſt and the believer. Our church ſpeaking of it ſays, That believers are one with Chriſt, and he with them, that they dwell in Chriſt, and Chriſt in them. Surely then, they that are thus cloſely united to Chriſt will know the moſt of this book, and will be the beſt commentators upon it: for it is not a ſealed book to them. The ſubject-matter is to them plain and open. Daily experience gives them clearer views of its ſweetneſs and fulneſs, and every ſtep they advance in the divine life affords them freſh occaſion to bleſs and praiſe God for this comfortable portion of his holy word.

My brethren, if you are united to Chriſt in the bonds of love, you know that theſe things are true; but if you have not his love in your heart, nor deſire it, you are not fit to read the Song: for you cannot underſtand it. A deaf man is as good a judge of a fine piece of muſic, as you are

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of a treatiſe upon that love, of which you never had a taſte. The Song is a book of experience, deſcribing Chriſt's love to his people, and the happineſs they have in the ſenſe of his love; but if you have no ſenſe of it, how can you underſtand what is here written concerning it? If you ſhould take it up and read it, having never had any fellowſhip with the Father nor the Son by the bond of the Spirit, it will appear to you an unintelligible piece of jargon. The Engliſh tranſlation would be as dark and myſterious as the original Hebrew, which you do not underſtand: for it is a ſealed book, until the Holy Spirit open its meaning; but all becomes plain and clear, when he ſheds abroad in the heart that love of which it treats, and the more he gives you to taſte of the love of Chriſt, the plainer and ſweeter will the book grow in your eſteem.

My chriſtian friends and brethren, you know theſe things to be true from your own experience. You ſet a great value upon this ſweet portion of ſcripture, and deſire to ſee the depths and heights of it: they will open more fully to your view, if you pray for more love and nearer communion with Chriſt. And if any of you my brethren, have been prevailed upon to ſeek for the happy experience of Chriſt's love, you are ready to join your hearts with mine to pray to him for a bleſſing on theſe diſcourſes. And

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as to you who have not been ſtirred up to ſeek, you ſtand in great need of our prayers, and we will offer them up for you. May he that heareth prayer, hear and anſwer.

We humbly beſeech thee, O thou God of love, to bring into the way of truth all thoſe who have erred and are deceived, concerning this portion of thy divine word. Remove all their prejudices. Shew the natural man, the ridiculer, and the unbeliever, that they want the love of which it treats. Convince them, bleſſed Jeſus, that thy love can make them happy, and nothing elſe can. Let them feel their guilt, and their danger, while the love of earthly and ſenſual hinders their ſeeking for thy ſpiritual and heavenly joys. And may thy good Spirit ſhed abroad the love of God in the hearts of all thoſe who are ſeeking it, that they may find this portion of ſcripture verified in their own ſouls, and daily fulfilled in their own experience. Oh that we may all know more of the love of God, and taſte and ſee how gracious the Lord is. May we enjoy that fellowſhip and communion with the Father and his Son Jeſus Chriſt, which will explain to our underſtandings and apply to our hearts all the comforts of this divine treatiſe. So be it, Lord Jeſus, to the praiſe of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three Perſons in one Jehovah, to whom the church militant and triumphant gives equal honour, and worſhip, and glory, now and for ever. *Amen* and *Amen*.

AN ALARM
TO
A CARELESS WORLD.

A DISCOURSE
OCCASIONED BY
THE LATE EARTHQUAKES,
PREACHED
NOVEMBER 30, 1755,
BEING THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT,
AT
ST. DUNSTAN'S IN THE WEST.

Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh. MATT. xxv. 13.

PREFACE.

DR. Sherlock, biſhop of London, in his letter concerning the late earthquakes has theſe words, " As to you " my brethren of the clergy, who ſhare " with me the care of the ſouls in " theſe populous cities, let me exhort " you (though I truſt you want not " to be exhorted) to awaken the peo- " ple, to call them from the lethargy in " which they have too long lived, and " make them ſee their own danger. " Speak to them, perſuade them, as " knowing the terrors of the Lord. " Speak to their hearts and conſciences " with ſuch plainneſs as becomes the " miniſters of the goſpel; tell them in " ſeaſon and out of ſeaſon, that unleſs " they repent, they muſt periſh. If the " warnings we have had are a call to " the people to repentance, remember

" they

" they are ſtill ſtronger calls on us to
" preach repentance, and to diſcharge
" the duty we owe to God and his
" church, and to the flock of Chriſt
" over whom we are placed. May
" this work of God proſper in our
" hands!" Amen, ſay I. This advice is worthy of a chriſtian biſhop, and I wiſh all the clergy in England would follow it. I have endeavoured to follow it in this plain diſcourſe, and although it was drawn up and printed in an hurry, yet it is ſeaſonable and neceſſary. The deſign of it was to rouſe careleſs ſinners out of their lethergy, and the neceſſity of calling upon them is now evident. I waited, while the former editions were ſelling, to ſee how they would be affected with the deſolation, which God hath wrought in the earth. But they are not alarmed. They lay it not to heart, but go on ſecure in the ways of ſin, as if no ſuch dreadful providence could befal them. They fortify themſelves in their ſecurity by ſeveral very abſurd opinions, which only to mention is to confute.

It

It is one very prevailing opinion, that earthquakes are not common in this country. They are not. But the leſs common they are, the more ſhould they alarm us when they come; for there is a providence over this country, and when He orders, our land ſhall ſhake and reel like a drunkard. He ſent two earthquakes lately, to ſtir us up to repentance, and he who ſent theſe can ſend a third, and London may ſhare the fate of Liſbon.

It is another opinion, that earthquakes are the effects of ſecond cauſes. Be it ſo. Then there is a firſt cauſe on whom they depend.

But the learned can give a philoſophical account of them. What! ſuch an account, I ſuppoſe, as they did of the earthquakes in the year 1750, by changing their names into airquakes, and then they were explained philoſophically. It will not be ſo eaſy to account for the ſhaking of the land for ſeveral hundred miles, and of the ſea for ſeveral thouſands at once, which was the caſe in theſe laſt earthquakes. What natural

cauſe

cauſe will they aſſign equal to this effect?

There is another opinion, from which men promiſe themſelves ſecurity, and that is the great wickedneſs of the Portugueſe. Doubtleſs they were ſinners, but not above all the inhabitants of the earth. We rival them in immorality, and we exceed them in infidelity. They were cut off in judgment. We are ſpared in mercy. From their puniſhment if we take no warning, we ſhall be greater ſinners than they could be: for if neither the goodneſs of God can ſoften our hardened hearts, nor his judgments terrify us, when we may fear, that when he draws the ſword of juſtice, we who would not cry for mercy at ſuch a time as this, ſhall receive judgment without mercy.

Careleſs ſinners may flatter themſelves with notions of ſafety, but unleſs they leave their ſins they cannot be ſafe. While the almighty is their enemy they can have no peace. May he open their eyes to ſee this truth practically, that they may find the neceſſity of being at peace with

with God. The way and means thereto is to ſue for mercy through Jeſus Chriſt by faith and repentance: but there is ſuch a general and violent oppoſition to this method of reformation, that we have more to fear from the anger of God againſt this dreadful ſin, than even from the trembling of the earth under us. May the prayers and humiliation of the righteous avert the judgments of God due to this and all the other crying ſins of this kingdom.

AN ALARM

TO A

CARELESS WORLD.

AMOS iv. 12.

Prepare to meet thy GOD.

THE church calls upon us, by the preſent ſolemnity, to bring into our moſt ſerious thoughts, the advent of our bleſſed Lord in the fleſh, when he came to viſit us in great humility. He appeared upon earth in the character of a meek, ſuffering, dying Saviour. But there is another advent not far off, when all fleſh ſhall ſee him in the majeſty of the Godhead. His firſt advent was in the loweſt humiliation, his ſecond advent will be in the higheſt exaltation. And we wait for that great day, when he will come again in his glorious majeſty to judge both the quick and the dead, hoping to be found, when he comes, watching and praying, that we may riſe with him to the life immortal.

We do not pretend to know the preciſe time of his coming: for of that day, and that hour, knoweth no man, but the judge himſelf has given us ſome ſigns and marks, by which we might be as certain, that he is nigh and ſtandeth before the door, as that ſummer is nigh, when the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs. And whenever we ſee theſe ſcripture ſigns and marks, it is our office and duty, as faithful watchmen, to give you notice, that you may be ready, leſt your Lord ſhould come in a day, when ye look not for him, and in an hour that ye are not aware of, and ſhould cut you aſunder, and appoint you your portion with the hypocrites, there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth. On this account, the ſubject appointed by the church for this day, falls in ſeaſonably with theſe remarkable providences, which have been lately manifeſted in this, and other countries. And I have therefore choſen a ſcripture proper to awaken your attention to the ſecond advent of Chriſt. It is exceedingly awful and ſolemn. The very reading of it muſt make a deep impreſſion upon every ſerious mind. "Prepare to meet thy God," the eternal and almighty God, who is coming in all his glory to judgment, and if the righteous ſcarcely be ſaved in that great day, where ſhall the wicked and the infidel appear? They will then have no excuſe for their ſins—ſelf-condemned they will

ſtand with guilt and horror before his tribunal, to hear their ſentence of condemnation paſt, which is never, never to be reverſed. So that unleſs an eternity of pain and miſery be the beſt thing we can work out in our ſhort life, we ſhould now think of making ſome proviſion for an eternity of happineſs. We ſhould now be preparing to meet our God. As we muſt meet him ſoon, it ſhould be our whole buſineſs to get ready and to be prepared, that whenever he comes, we may enter in with him into the joy of our Lord. This is the inſtruction which I ſhall draw from the text, " Prepare to meet thy God."

Firſt, We here learn that God our Saviour, who once came in great humility to viſit us, is now preparing to meet us in judgment. And

Secondly, We ſhould therefore be prepared to meet him. And,

Thirdly, I ſhall endeavour to ſtir you up to the true goſpel preparation, that whenever our Saviour comes, you may lift up your heads with joy, knowing that your redemption draweth nigh. And

May the ever bleſſed Spirit, from whom the preparation muſt come, aſſiſt us with his grace, that our meditation firſt upon our Saviour's preparing to meet us in judgment, may be the means of preparing us to meet him. " Prepare to meet " thy God." The ſuffering Jeſus was united to the eternal God, and ſo united, that as the reaſonable

reaſonable ſoul and fleſh are one man, ſo God and man are one Chriſt. At his firſt coming he viſited us in great humility, and the Godhead was veiled under a covering of fleſh, but at his ſecond coming, all fleſh ſhall ſee that Jeſus is God indeed. Every eye ſhall then behold the divine glory of the ſuffering Saviour, and they who once pierced him at his bitter paſſion, or ſince with their horrid blaſphemies, ſhall then confeſs to their everlaſting ſhame, that he is the almighty God of heaven and earth. On this account, we ſhould be prepared to meet him. At the time appointed he came to ſuffer for the ſins of the world, and at the time appointed he will come to judgment. His ſecond advent is as certain as his firſt. It was foretold in the Old Teſtament, and promiſed in the New, and the ſcriptures cannot be broken. God had revealed it in the cleareſt manner to the patriarchs, ſo that Enoch, the 7th from Adam, prophecied of it, ſaying—" Behold the Lord cometh with ten " thouſand of his ſaints to execute judgment " upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly " among them, of all their ungodly deeds, which " they have ungodly committed, and of all their " hard ſpeeches, which ungodly ſinners have " ſpoken againſt him." The Father of the faithful knew that he was to come to execute judgment upon all, and ſpeaks with confidence, " ſhall not the judge of all the earth do right?"

And

And Job had the ſame holy confidence, when he made his ſupplication to his judge, and the ſolemnity of his coming to judgment, Solomon being a prophet, foreſaw and has plainly deſcribed it in theſe words—" God ſhall bring " every work into judgment with every ſecret " thing, whether it be good, or whether it be " evil." And the judge himſelf has given us a very circumſtantial deſcription in three of the evangeliſts, of the proceſs of the great day, and has called upon us again and again, to be always ready and prepared for it. His apoſtles argue from the certainty of our appearing before the judgment ſeat of Chriſt, and frequently make uſe of theſe terrors of the Lord to perſuade men to faith and repentance. And there is a very remarkable circumſtance, which gives great weight to theſe authorities; when our Lord is deſcribing the general judgment, he confirms his account with a promiſe, that he would come to judge the jewiſh nation, before that generation ſhould paſs away. Accordingly he came; and there has not a tittle failed of what he foretold concerning the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, or concerning the diſperſion of the Jews over the face of the earth. It is then a matter of fact, that he has already acted as judge, and he will come to complete his office. It is not more certain that the ſun will riſe to-morrow, than that he who judged the jewiſh nation, will ſoon come to judge the whole earth.

earth. His ſecond advent is fixed and determined to the fulneſs of time, as well as the firſt was. He will come in his glorious majeſty at the laſt day. And in the mean time, he comes with many ſignal ſtrokes of vengeance to awaken a careleſs ſleepy world. He viſits the inhabitants of the earth with his judgments, that they may learn righteouſneſs, and he has lately viſited us with ſome of his heavieſt judgments, and I hope many of you have been ſtirred up by them to prepare to meet your God. And it is high time we ſhould be all prepared: for the marks and ſigns of his ſecond advent are fulfilling daily. His coming cannot be far off. The day, indeed, and the hour, are not known, but if you will compare the uncommon events, which our Lord ſays were to be the fore-runners of his coming to judgment, with what has lately happened in the world, you muſt conclude, that the time is at hand. He foretells us, that there ſhould then be wars, and rumours of wars: and are there not wars, and rumours of more wars? There were to be peſtilences, and we have had the peſtilence for more than ten years in this kingdom. There were to be great earthquakes in diverſe places, and there have been earthquakes lately in many parts of the world, and in a far greater number than they ever were in any other age. And theſe earthquakes were to be attended with fearful ſights; and did not

many

many fearful ſights in the element attend the two laſt earthquakes we had in this city? But the worſt ſign of all is the preſent decay of religion among us; this renders the reſt more terrible, and makes it to be feared, that as we are ripe for deſtruction, ſo we may ſoon expect to have our candleſtick removed: "for "when the Son of Man cometh, ſhall he find "faith upon the earth?" ſays Chriſt. There will be ſo little, that he ſhall ſcarce find any. The true ſaving faith will be diminiſhed from among the children of men! and it has for ſome time been baniſhed out of the popiſh countries, and the reformed churches have lately fallen ſadly from the faith, and have preſerved very little more of chriſtianity than the mere name: and in our own church we have kept up the form of godlineſs, but we are ſo far from having the power, that we deny any perſon can have it, and the few, who ſay they have it, are treated as madmen and enthuſiaſts. Theſe are ſome of the infallible ſigns of our Lord's ſecond advent. From them we are aſſured that it is not at a great diſtance. When we behold the fig-tree, and all the trees ſhooting forth, then we know that ſummer is near; and ſo likewiſe, when we ſee theſe things come to paſs, we know that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. It will not be long before the Son of man will come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory,

and becauſe we are aſſured that he will come ſoon, and yet know not the day nor the hour, we ſhould therefore be always waiting with watchfulneſs and prayer. Our Lord required us to be always in this devout frame of mind, when he cloſed the volume of revelation with theſe words, "ſurely I come quickly"—ſurely, ſays the almighty Judge, I come quickly to judgment—to which the faithful reply, "Amen, even ſo, come Lord Jeſus." Happy would it be for us all, if we were ſo well prepared to meet our God, that when we ſee the ſigns of his coming ſpeedily, and hear him promiſe, ſurely I come quickly, then we might give our "Amen, even ſo come Lord Jeſus." And are you then, my brethren, not only ready, but alſo praying for his coming? Do you wait for it with faith, and are you looking for that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt? If you are in this happy ſtate, then you can cry out with joy, Lord we believe the promiſes, and we ſee the ſigns of thy ſpeedy coming, even ſo, come Lord Jeſus. But if you are not in this happy ſtate, then I proceed

Secondly, To ſhew, that ſince Chriſt will ſoon come to judgment, you ought therefore to be prepared to meet your God. He will come in all the glory of the Godhead, attended with the multitude of the heavenly hoſt, and before him ſhall be gathered all nations. Every one of us muſt

muſt appear before his tribunal. We muſt meet the almighty God in judgment, when he cometh to take vengeance of his adverſaries: and ought we not to be prepared for this awful meeting? We cannot reſiſt the Almighty—we cannot fly from his preſence—we cannot conceal one ſecret thought from him, and is it not then our intereſt to make the almighty Judge our friend? For what king going to make war againſt another king, ſitteth not down firſt, and conſulteth whether he be able with ten thouſand to meet him that cometh againſt him with twenty thouſand; or elſe while the other is yet a great way off, he ſendeth an embaſſage, and deſireth conditions of peace. When the king of kings cometh againſt you, armed with his omnipotence, you can have no hopes of ſafety, but in deſiring conditions of peace. Your only way is to ſubmit, and to try to make him your friend. Then you will be ſafe. So ſoon as you have ſecured the friendſhip of the ſovereign Judge, and are under the protection of his almighty power, then you are prepared to meet him in judgment; and therefore ſince this preparation is the principal buſineſs of life, we ought to labour to ſecure his friendſhip, as the means to it. And how then ſhall we make him our friend? Sin made him our enemy, and it is the guilt of ſin in the conſcience, which makes his coming to judgment terrible, and will make the eternal

puniſhment of ſin terrible indeed. Take away ſin, and God is reconciled. Let the ſoul be cleanſed from the pollution, and the conſcience purged from the guilt of ſin, and there will no fear remain of condemnation. The Judge will then be the Saviour, and we ſhall have no dread of his judgment, having already received the bleſſings of his ſalvation.

The goſpel has propoſed a plain method of bringing the mind into this happy ſtate, and it is generally effected in the following manner. While the ſinner lies ſecure in ſin, he cannot be prepared to meet his God. He muſt be awakened. He muſt be deeply convinced of his guilt and danger, and under the ſenſe of them, he muſt be humbled to the very duſt. Theſe are the firſt ſteps towards his preparation. The holy Spirit has now opened his eyes, and he ſees his loſt ruined condition. He beholds the God of nature at enmity with him, and all the powers in nature combined to deſtroy him, and if he be ever ſaved, it muſt be all free mercy: for in himſelf he is miſerable and helpleſs, and therefore not daring to look up unto heaven, he ſmites upon his breaſt, ſaying, "God be merciful to me a ſinner." Under theſe convictions he labours, which though painful for a time, yet being the door and entrance into ſalvation, are therefore a bleſſing, and the greater bleſſing, as they are the general way, by which God brings

ſinners

ſinners unto himſelf: for the deeper and more diſtreſſing theſe convictions of ſin are, the greater neceſſity will the ſinner find of mercy, and the more earneſtly will he ſeek, until he obtain it. And he has the infallible promiſe of God to encourage his ſeeking, "bleſſed are they that hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs, for they ſhall be filled." In God's own good time he begins to find his intereſt in this promiſe: he has faith given him to apply it to himſelf: he ſees his intereſt in the righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt, and has the love of God ſhed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghoſt, giving him all joy and peace in believing. And the ſenſe of this pardoning love caſteth out fear: for now as his faith grows, ſo does he with comfort know that Jeſus Chriſt is his Saviour and his God: he finds daily proof of it in the change of his life and converſation, not walking now by ſight, but by faith. His will is now become renewed, and he loves and delights to do the will of God in the inward man. He has grace and ſtrength given him to run the way of his commandments, now his heart is ſet at liberty. Thus walking with God, his reconciled Father in Jeſus, and truſting to his grace and ſtrength, he will be found watching and praying, whenever his Lord comes, and will therefore be always ready and prepared to go forth to meet him.

In

In this method the Holy Spirit prepares us to meet our God: he firſt convinces us of our ſinful ſtate, in which we are at enmity with God, and are not prepared to meet him; and then he convinces us of our reconciliation with him, of which we have the witneſs of the word, together with the witneſs of the Spirit, bearing his teſtimony with our ſpirits, that we are the children of God, and we have the outward witneſs of our lives and converſations, which we are enabled by faith, to direct according to the rule of God's commandments. And then we need not doubt of our intereſt in the almighty Judge: for he has waſhed us from our ſins in his blood, and has cloathed us with his all-perfect righteouſneſs, and having thus ſaved us from our ſins, we are thereby ſaved from the fear of judgment. And what have we then to fear? Our Saviour is the judge—his omnipotence is our protection—he comes in all his glory to take us up with him into his heaven, and to make us partakers of his everlaſting joys. Bleſſed, and for ever bleſſed are they, who are thus prepared to meet their God.

And are you, then, by brethren, prepared in this manner? Have you ſecured the friendſhip of the Judge, ſo that whenever he comes you are ready to meet him? An eternity of happineſs or miſery depends on your preparation, and there-

therefore I hope the vaſt importance of the ſubject will command your attention, while I am endeavouring under the

Third and laſt head, to apply what has been ſaid as a motive to ſtir you up to be always prepared to meet your God. You have heard the character of the Judge. He is the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity—the Lord of Hoſts is his name. He is the almighty creator of all things viſible and inviſible—when he ſpake the word they were made—He commanded and they ſtood faſt---His providence ruleth over them all, and he upholdeth them by the word of his power. And this eternal, infinite and almighty God hath appointed a day, wherein he will be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. Such is the glorious majeſty of the Judge! And are you prepared to meet him? Have you no fear nor dread in your minds, if he ſhould come this night? If you ſhould this moment hear the loud trump of God calling the world to judgment, and ſhould ſee the Lord of heaven and earth coming with thouſands and ten thouſands of angels and ſaints, how would it affect you? Conſider, whether

you

you could ſtand the ſhock? Look into your hearts, and ſee if you be this moment in the very ſtate, in which you would wiſh to appear before Chriſt's tribunal. Put the queſtion to yourſelves, ſuppoſe the Judge was to come this hour, am I prepared to meet my God? If you are prepared, you are happy. But if not, you are and will be miſerable, unleſs you can be perſuaded to ſeek an intereſt in the Judge. And this I will attempt in the help of God, under two or three ſhort remarks.

Firſt, To them who do not believe the doctrine. Theſe are deiſts and profeſt infidels, the open enemies of Jehovah and his Chriſt, who having denied him to be God, think they are out of the reach of his judgment. I hope there are not many of them here preſent. Some perhaps there may be; for I know they are terribly affrighted at the late earthquakes, and their leaders have no way to quiet their conſciences, but to aſſure them that they are mere natural effects, produced by natural cauſes; as if it were leſs terrible to be deſtroyed by a natural cauſe, than to be deſtroyed by the God of nature. Poor little philoſophers! in what a deſpicable light do they appear, who are forced to exclude a providence, in order to get rid of their fears? And ſo for ſafety, they take ſhelter in atheiſm: and let them talk ever ſo much of one ſupreme being, yet they

they are rank atheiſts; for their one ſupreme being is one ſupreme nothing. God has been pleaſed to reveal his eſſence and perſonality to us, and his revealed account of himſelf they deny, and conſequently whatever they ſet up againſt him, be it a God in one perſon, or thirty thouſand Gods, it is all a mere imagination, a one ſupreme being without any exiſtence. No wonder, they ſhould live looſe libertine lives, ſince they are without God in the world. And what can we do but pity and pray for theſe men, who have adopted this ſyſtem of practical atheiſm? Oh that the eternal Spirit would open their eyes, and if they have but a glimpſe of truth, they will ſee that Jeſus is God. And if they will not confeſs him here before men, there is a day coming, when they ſhall confeſs that he is a God indeed. At the glory of his appearance, theſe bold blaſphemers, who now ridicule his divinity, will then be calling to the mountains to fall on them, and to the hills to cover them. The majeſty of God the almighty Judge will ſtrike them with terror, and when they are called before his throne, to give an account of the hard ſpeeches, which they had ſpoken againſt him, they will ſtand guilty, and trembling, waiting for that righteous ſentence, which will carry with it inexpreſſible miſery, "Go ye curſed into ever-
"laſting fire, prepared for the devil and his

" angels." Oh that theſe terrors of the Lord may ſink deep into the heart of every unbeliever, who is now at open war with his Judge, while I am,

Secondly, Addreſſing myſelf to the careleſs ſinners among you, who are, I fear, a great number. The generality of them who profeſs chriſtianity live to this world, and ſeldom think about the next. Their pleaſures and diverſions are the chief object of their purſuit, and money and honour and power are ſought after, that they may enjoy themſelves the better. All worldly men are upon this ſcheme; and while they purſue it, they go on ſecurely in their ſins, and are careleſs about the concerns of eternity. Their hearts are engaged upon other matters, than preparing to meet their God. Their attachment to the world is the greateſt obſtacle to their preparation, and therefore we are forbidden to " love the world, " or the things of the world, for if any man love " the world, the love of the father is not in " him." And if the love of God be not in us, we cannot be prepared to meet him in judgment.

Conſider this all ye who ſpeak peace to your ſouls, while you indulge yourſelves in ſin. You believe that God will call you before his judgment-ſeat, and that if you live and die in your ſins, you cannot eſcape the eternal puniſhment of them. You know not but the Judge may call

you

you before him this night, and you are not prepared, and yet you have no concern about it. You ſin on with the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt before your eyes to which you may be brought before the next act of ſin be finiſhed. What can we think of this unaccountable conduct? Certainly men in their ſober ſenſes cannot act ſuch an abſurd part. It is againſt reaſon: for if theſe very men were ſetting out upon a journey of two or three hundred miles, they would make more preparation than they do for eternity. It is againſt ſelf-intereſt: for who would take ſome preſent empty indulgences of ſin, as an equivalent for eternal happineſs? It is againſt all principles of good ſenſe to prefer ſin to holineſs, and to chooſe hell before heaven. And it is deſtroying religion, whoſe ſole buſineſs it is to prepare the ſoul to meet its God. And are any of you, my brethren, in this ſtrange careleſs ſtate? Do you act thus againſt reaſon and ſelf-intereſt, againſt common ſenſe and religion? You are guilty of all theſe inconſiſtences, if the Judge ſhould come in an hour, when ye look not for him. And he may come and find you unprepared as you are at preſent. You cannot promiſe yourſelves an hour to prepare in. His judgments are now in the earth, and they are ſent to rouſe you out of your ſecurity. Oh that you would be awakened by them and ſee your danger. Do you not ſuppoſe, that the inhabi-

tants

tants of Liſbon thought themſelves as ſafe as you may do at preſent? They had no apprehenſions of an earthquake. They did not imagine that God was going to deſtroy them that morning. But you hear how they were ſurprized and overthrown with a great deſtruction. While they were ſpeaking, peace, peace, unto themſelves, they were called and hurried in a moment to judgment. One had ſet his heart upon getting an handſome fortune, and was juſt ſitting down to caſt up his accounts, and he was cut off that moment, and called to judgment, with a ſoul full of the love of money. Another, intent upon his pleaſures, was feeding his imagination with a vile ſcene of indulgences, and his filthy ſoul was taken in the midſt of this impurity, and brought before the all-pure and holy God. One with an oath in his mouth was calling for damnation upon his ſoul, and it came, while the words were in his mouth, and down he ſunk into the pit of hell. Dreadful it is to think of the manner, in which they were ſurprized and cut off in their ſins. Suppoſe ſuch a judgment ſhould be ſent to this city at the ſame time of the day, how would it overtake ſinners both high and low? The great, tired with diverſions of the preceding day, would be ſurprized in their ſleep, and would awake in the eternal world full of hatred to Jeſus Chriſt, and his people, and his holy faith. What can they expect from the Judge? And

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the lower people would be up, but at the devil's work, going on careleſs in their ſins, lying, and curſing, and ſwearing, and blaſpheming God, and ſnatched away with ſome horrid imprecation in their mouths. Why may not this happen to you, as well as to the inhabitants of Liſbon? Why may you not be thus cut off, and die in your ſins, yea in the very act of ſin? You have more reaſon to fear it than they had: for your ſins are greater than theirs. Think not that they were ſinners above all the inhabitants of the earth, becauſe they ſuffered ſuch things. I tell you, nay; but except you repent, you ſhall all likewiſe periſh. The ſame immoralities which reigned among them, reign alſo in this city; but the contempt of Jeſus Chriſt, and his religion, and the oppoſition now made to the progreſs of the goſpel by every method, but ſhedding of blood, from which God with-holds the enemies hands, theſe are crimes of a deeper guilt, than the unhappy Portugueſe had to anſwer for. The common people in thoſe popiſh countries are kept in great ignorance, they have not the light of the goſpel ſhining clearly among them, as you have, and therefore they were not guilty of that one damnable ſin, which makes all your other ſins ſo exceeding ſinful. You ſin againſt the fulleſt evidence; you reject the light of the goſpel in your underſtandings, and you act againſt it in your lives; and you ſin on, when you are invited

vited to forſake your ſins and live. God ſends his miniſters to plead with you, but their counſel you reject with contempt. The means of grace are before you, but you refuſe to make uſe of them. You have the ſcriptures in your hands, and you may there read the danger of your careleſs way of life, but the ſcripture has no influence. If none of theſe motives can prevail, be aſſured, that your guilt will increaſe in proportion to the advantages you enjoy; and the more reaſon there was for your being prepared to meet your God, the heavier will the condemnation be, if he ſhould come and find you unprepared. May you lay theſe things to heart, and by the grace of the Holy Spirit, now reſolve to prepare for the coming of our almighty God and Saviour.

And if you have any deſire to be prepared, there is one motive which ought to have great weight with you, and it is taken from a matter of fact. There are, God be praiſed, many perſons in this city, ſeveral I hope in this congregation, who have obtained the love and friendſhip of the ſupreme judge. Look into their lives and examine them cloſely. See how they are affected with the report of theſe judgments, which are now in the earth. You will find no dread or fear in their minds. They are not afraid of any evil tidings. The inward peace and joy, which ariſe from the ſenſe of God's loving them in

Chriſt Jeſus, are not leſſened by any outward calamity. They know that he, who is the Lord of nature, will make all things work together for their good, and therefore their heart is eſtabliſhed and will not ſhrink, though the earth ſhould quake from its very foundations, and the hills ſhould be carried into the midſt of the ſea. If the whole courſe of nature ſhould be diſturbed, they have nothing to fear. God is their friend. They are kept by the arms of the Almighty, and if the heavens ſhould paſs away, and the earth, and all that is therein ſhould be burnt up, yet ſtill they are ſafe. In life and death they can ſtay their minds upon God in perfect peace. You cannot deny, that there are chriſtians in this ſafe and happy ſtate: for God has promiſed it them, and we declare that God is faithful and true, and if you believe it, how does it affect you? Do you find no deſire to be as ſafe and happy as they are? Does no wiſh ariſe in your hearts, that you might be under the protection of the almighty God, and that he would ſet you on high out of the reach of public calamity; ſo that whenever he comes to viſit a ſinful people laden with iniquity, and to be glorified in their deſtruction, then you may rejoice and be exceeding glad, knowing aſſuredly that your eternal redemption is at hand?

Lay all theſe conſiderations together, and may the Lord let you ſee the importance of them.

God

God is preparing to meet you in judgment, and eternity depends on your being prepared to meet him. You have no time to loſe. He may come this night. And you are not prepared. What would your condition be, if he ſhould call you unprepared? Therefore as you love your ſouls apply to him this moment. Now go to the throne of grace for pardon, leſt you ſhould be called before the throne of glory unpardoned. Cry aloud for mercy. The Judge may ſtill be intreated. Oh plead with him then, and be importunate, until he become your friend. Remind him of his love to ſinners. Urge his bloody ſweat, his bitter croſs and paſſion, his cruel mockings, buffetings, and ſcourgings, endured all for ſinners. Plead theſe with him, and lay before him the torments and the ſhame of the croſs, and the piercing of his hands and feet, which are the engravings of his love to ſinners, and be aſſured that tender heart cannot want love for them, which bled to death for their ſalvation. Hold on this plea, until you find him gracious, and are enabled to place your whole truſt and confidence in the ſufferings and death of Jeſus Chriſt. Then you will be ſafe. There is no condemnation to them who are in Chriſt Jeſus. They ſhall be found in him at the great day, when he will become to them the author of eternal ſalvation. Knowing this by faith, they are prepared to meet their God.

I hope

I hope he has heard my prayers for you this day, and, if it be his bleſſed will, has diſpoſed you to ſeek an intereſt in the Judge of all the earth. He will come to judgment, and quickly. May the Holy Spirit prepare us all to meet him. Oh! if he ſhould come this night, how would he find you? Are you all ready? Is every one of you fit to die? Have you all got your lamps trimmed, and ye yourſelves prepared; that if there ſhould be a great cry made at midnight, Behold the bridegroom cometh, ye may be ready, and enter in with him to the marriage? And if he ſhould call you by an earthquake, or by any other judgment, have you ſo ſure an intereſt in him, that ſudden death would be welcome? Think, what an awful thing it would be, if you were to enter upon the eternal world this night, where your ſtate is to be unalterably fixed for ever. O what continual preparation ſhould you be making for eternity. For if you die unprepared, all is loſt. Hell and torments are your everlaſting portion. And if you are not quite in love with miſery, now beg of God to ſhew you your danger, and to deliver you from it. The door of mercy is ſtill open. O that you may find an entrance, and preſs forwards with an holy violence, until you receive grace to prepare you to meet your God. And let us all agree to look up to him for it, in that excellent form of prayer, which our church has appointed for this day.

"Almighty God give us grace, that we may "caſt away the works of darkneſs, and put "upon us the armour of light now in the time "of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jeſus "Chriſt came to viſit us in great humility; that "in the laſt day, when he ſhall come again in "his glorious majeſty to judge both the quick "and dead, we may (be prepared to meet him "and may) riſe to the life immortal, through "him who liveth and reigneth with thee, and "the Holy Ghoſt, now and ever. *Amen.*"

THE

DUTY OF WATCHFULNESS

ENFORCED.

IN A

DISCOURSE,

PREACHED

DECEMBER 14, 1755,

BEING THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT,

AT

ST. DUNSTAN'S IN THE WEST.

Bleſſed are thoſe Servants, whom the Lord when he cometh ſhall find watching. LUKE xii. 37.

THE DUTY OF WATCHFULNESS ENFORCED.



THE DUTY OF WATCHFULNESS ENFORCED.

ST. MATTHEW XXV. 13.

Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour, wherein the Son of man cometh.

THE church is ſtill preparing our minds for the ſecond advent of our bleſſed Lord. He is to come again in his glorious majeſty to judge both the quick and the dead; and becauſe we know that he certainly will come, and yet are uncertain about the preciſe time of his coming, we ought therefore to be always ready. And this temper of mind is recommended to us in the text, wherein the judge himſelf requires us to watch, becauſe we know neither the day nor the hour, wherein he will come to judgment.

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The words are part of the parable of the ten virgins, who ſet out to meet the bridegroom, and while he tarried, they all ſlumbered and ſlept. But at midnight he came unexpected, and the five wiſe virgins, who had kept the oil of grace burning bright in their lamps, were ready, and went in with him into the marriage, and the door was ſhut. Afterward came the five fooliſh virgins, who had been ſeeking to buy oil at a time, when it ſhould have been burning the brighteſt in their lamps, ſaying Lord, Lord, open to us. But he anſwered and ſaid, Verily I ſay unto you, I know you not. Chriſt's inference from hence is, that we ſhould be always watchful, becauſe we know not when the bridegroom will come. "Watch therefore, for ye know "neither the day nor the hour, wherein the "Son of man cometh." Be always prepared and ready to meet me, leſt I ſhould ſurprize you in your ſins, and the door of mercy ſhould be ſhut againſt you. Remember that I have the key of David, and if I open, no man ſhutteth, and if I ſhut, no man openeth. If I ſhut the door of mercy againſt you, it cannot be opened, but you will be delivered over to the tormentors, to dwell with them in the lake that burneth with fire and brimſtone for ever and ever.

In the words then, we have firſt, A duty enjoined, which is watchfulneſs—watch therefore. And

Secondly,

Secondly, A particular reaſon to enforce it, becauſe "ye know neither the day nor the hour "wherein the Son of man cometh."

And while I am opening theſe particulars, I hope the Spirit of God will open your hearts to receive inſtruction from them. May he keep every vain and wandering thought out of your minds, and make you watchful indeed, while I am recommending watchfulneſs.

Firſt, From the authority of our Lord's command, watch therefore. I define watchfulneſs to be that ready and prepared temper of mind, with which the believer is always waiting for his being called out of this world. He watches and is ready and prepared, becauſe he knows that he ſhall be called ſoon. If no judgment ſhould cut him off before he reach to the full age of man, yet he ſees death approaching; and put it at the greateſt diſtance, yet the eye of faith can bring it near: for what are threeſcore years and ten? Compared with eternity they are but a mere point of time. All men know this truth, but the believer alone knows it practically. He has learnt the true value of this ſhort life, and is aſſured that it cannot be long, before he muſt enter into the eternal world. He is convinced of the vaſt importance of being ready and prepared for his great change, becauſe death will fix his condition for ever and ever, either in happineſs or miſery; and therefore he reſolves with

holy Job, "All the days of my appointed time "will I wait till my change come, (Job xiv. 14.) He will wait all the days of his appointed time, leſt death ſhould ſurprize him. He knows that the ſting of death is ſin, and conſequently he watches againſt ſin, that whenever death comes, it may come unarmed of its ſting, and therefore without any power to hurt or terrify. Sin is his moſt deadly enemy, becauſe it ſtirred up all his other enemies againſt him; he is in arms and at open war againſt it—he is ever upon his guard—and he does not truſt to his own ſtrength, but he takes to himſelf the whole armour of God, that he may fight manfully againſt ſin, and all the allies of ſin. And being ſtrong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, he goes on conquering and to conquer, watching, and praying, and fighting, until death come to put an end to the engagement, and to proclaim the glad tidings of everlaſting peace.

No perſon can watch in this manner but the chriſtian, and I make it the principal part of the definition of watchfulneſs, that it is the readineſs and preparation, wherewith the believer always waits for his being called out of this world. This watchfulneſs is to be found no where but among believers; becauſe without the true living faith, it is impoſſible to watch. The unbeliever denies the matter of fact, upon which watchfulneſs is grounded. Chriſt's coming in the glory

of the Godhead to judgment makes no part of his creed. And every ſinner who admits the fact, muſt fear and dread Chriſt's coming, and can have no motive to watch for it, until he believe, that the almighty Judge is his friend. When faith aſſures him of this, then he begins to lift up his eyes with joy, and to look for the coming of his Judge and Saviour. And this faith is wrought in all the children of God by the operation of the holy Spirit, who gives them joy and peace in believing. He ſheds abroad the love of God in their hearts, and thereby takes out the fear of death and judgment. Then watchfulneſs becomes pleaſant. To be always ready and prepared to meet his God is the happy frame and temper of mind which is formed in the believer by faith working by love. He believes, therefore he watches. His faith is operative, therefore it keeps him watchful. It is a faith working by love, therefore it makes him love to watch. He loves God, and finds a heaven of joy in loving him, and therefore he waits with ſtedfaſt hope for the bleſſed time, when he ſhall be filled with love. Oh what muſt it be to ſee and to love God in glory, when but a ray of divine love darted into the ſoul at preſent, brings with it ſuch pure and ſpiritual delight, as makes all the joys of the world fade away into nothing, yea, even to become vanity itſelf. Therefore happy is he who watches—more happy the believer

liever who loves to watch—but thrice happy is that faithful and wiſe ſervant, whom his Lord when he cometh ſhall find ſo doing.

This is the true goſpel watchfulneſs; it is made up of the active graces of faith, and hope, and love, which keep the chriſtian ſoldier always upon the alarm, leaſt his implacable enemies, who are ever waiting for his deſtruction, ſhould ſurprize him. And among what ſet of men ſhall we find this watchful ſpirit? Look around the world, and ſee who they are, that are waiting for their Lord's coming, with watchfulneſs and prayer. Alas! their number is very ſmall. The generality of men profeſſing chriſtianity, live careleſs and unconcerned about their ſalvation: and careleſs ſinners do no more watch, than a man faſt aſleep can be ſaid to be watchful. Careleſſneſs is the very contrary temper to watching, and careleſſneſs in ſin is directly oppoſite to chriſtian watchfulneſs: for ſin makes the ſoul as unfit to watch, as drunkenneſs does the body, and to be careleſs in ſin lulls the ſoul faſt aſleep. And in this condition, the Judge, whenever he comes, ſurprizes ſinners. He finds them ſunk down into the dead ſleep of ſin, when they ſhould have been watching and praying againſt ſin, and they do not even dream of his coming. As it was in the days before the flood, though the Lord's prophet admoniſhed them of their danger, yet they went on eating and drinking,

drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the flood came and ſwept them all away: ſo ſhall it be, when the Son of man cometh; he will find careleſs ſinners in the ſame ſtate, neither watching nor prepared. If you look at their particular vices, you will ſee how each indiſpoſes them for watching. How can the glutton watch ſtupified with meat, and the drunkard intoxicated with drink? The one will be taken while he is dozing and ſleeping under the load of an overcharged ſtomach, and the other while he is dead drunk, and their filthy ſouls and bodies will appear in this ſhocking condition before the all-pure God. The worldly-minded man, whatever worldly object his heart be ſet upon, cannot watch. Take heed of the cares of this life, ſays the Judge himſelf. We ſhould take great heed, leſt they ſhould get too much room in our hearts, becauſe the love of this preſent world is inconſiſtent with watching and preparing for the eternal world. The prophane ſwearer can have no thoughts of watching. He defies God, and is ſo ſecure in his curſing and ſwearing, that he is not afraid to call for damnation. He prays all the day long, and earneſtly too, that his poor ſoul may be damned. If God ſhould hear his prayers, what will become of him? How can he eſcape, when the Lord cometh with ten thouſand of his ſaints to execute judgment upon all, and to call ungodly

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ſinners to an account for the hard ſayings, which they had ſpoken againſt him? The whoremonger and adulterer cannot watch. Their impure ſouls are enſlaved to unholy and beaſtly luſts, which indiſpoſe them for watching. Whenever Chriſt comes, he will ſurprize them: for the immutable decree is gone out of his mouth—"Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." but they live ſecure in their ſins, and have no concern about being called to judgment, therefore he will come in a day when they look not for him, and in an hour, that they are not aware of. Surely you will not ſay that any of theſe men watch, unleſs it be for their own deſtruction. And as to the other lovers of pleaſure they are afraid of Chriſt's coming, and therefore it is impoſſible they ſhould watch for it. The love of pleaſure is the characteriſtic of this age. It is ſeen in nothing ſo much as in the madneſs with which men are running at this very time after public diverſions. The play-houſes are crowded. The opera-houſe is full of the politeſt company. Balls and concerts increaſe every day. The effects of carding and gaming are felt everywhere. The ſpirit of pleaſure is gone forth, and has ſeized all orders of men from the higheſt to the loweſt. Now are any of theſe people watching? Are they waiting for Chriſt's coming, who are ſeeking to pleaſe themſelves? And when he comes, will he delight to find his

ſervants

ſervants taken up with diverſions, and their hearts ſet upon purſuing them? Certainly, this is not the ſpirit of chriſtian watchfulneſs, which he recommended and enjoined to all his diſciples: for they cannot be prepared to enjoy happineſs with him, while the love of diverſion is the ruling paſſion of their ſouls: and it is certainly the ruling paſſion, when they are ſo abſolutely fixed upon their pleaſures, that no divine viſitation, no remarkable providence can move them. Though they ſee the finger of God viſible in his judgments, yet they take no warning. Neither wars, nor peſtilence, no public calamity; no earthquake, however dreadful, even if it deſtroy cities, and lay waſte kingdoms; no earthquake be it ſuch as never was before, ſince God made man upon the earth; for we have no account in hiſtory of the ſea and the land ſhaking and trembling for thouſands of miles at the ſame time, as they did in the late earthquakes, none of theſe divine viſitations can awaken the lovers of pleaſure from their ſpirit of ſlumber. God calls upon them by all theſe providences, but they hear him not. The more loudly he calls, the more do they harden their hearts, and ſink the deeper into their pleaſures; and the more loudly his miniſters call, they fret and rage the more at theſe troubles of Iſrael. And if conſcience at any time begin to grow uneaſy, they fly for relief to the world and its amuſe-

amuſements. The play-houſe is the general place of refuge, where they go to quiet conſcience, and to lull it aſleep. This brings together that vaſt crowd, which daily frequents the play-houſe, and which fills every part and corner of it from top to bottom. And yet theſe very perſons, who would not go to a play, unleſs they knew it would be a full houſe, are very angry at a full church; nay ſo very angry that they will not come to church, if it be full; nay ſo exceedingly angry, that I know ſome of them, who think the miniſter ſhould be ſtarved, and they will do what they can to ſtarve him, who happens to have a crowded congregation. I mention this with great concern, becauſe it ſhews by what ſpirit theſe men are actuated, who rejoice in a full play-houſe, but fret and rage with malice at a full church. What ſpirit is this, that is pleaſed to ſee the devil's houſe crowded, and is vexed to ſee the houſe of God filled? Is the play-houſe then a fitter place to watch in, than the church? And are they in a proper poſture of watchfulneſs, who are ſitting and delighted to the ſoul to ſee a filthy play acted, and if they ſhould be called out of the world in the midſt of one of theſe lewd ſcenes, would their minds be in a proper temper to appear before God? Dreadful it is to think what their condition would be, who ſhould come reeking hot out of the play-houſe, with an imagination full of lewd ideas,

and

and indulging and enjoying them, and in this deteſtable impurity to ſtand at God's tribunal. Whenever you go to the play, you do not know but this may happen, and if it ſhould happen, you die in the very act of ſin, and you are loſt for ever. Conſider this, and lay it to heart, all ye who are lovers of pleaſure, more than lovers of God. Be convinced that the way of pleaſure is the very reverſe of chriſtian watchfulneſs, and therefore unleſs you prefer time to eternity, now ſhake off the lethargy of ſin, and begin to watch. Suppoſe Chriſt ſhould come this night, and this city ſhould be deſtroyed, as Liſbon was, by an earthquake, conſider what the conſequence would be, if you ſhould be found unprepared. If you live in the open breach of God's commandments, if you are running greedily after pleaſure, nay if you are but careleſs and unconcerned about the ſtate of your ſouls, you will not be found watching. The Judge has commanded you to watch, and this command is as much your duty as any of the ten commandments, nay more, becauſe you keep them to no purpoſe, unleſs you keep them with a watchful ſpirit. If Chriſt ſhould come, when you are not waiting for him with faith and love, he will find you neglecting his advice, and deſpiſing his admonitions, and cry ever ſo loud for mercy, "Lord, Lord, open to us," then it will be too late; the door of mercy will be ſhut for ever,

ever, and he will declare, I never knew you. Where will be your portion, when heaven is ſhut againſt you? Where, but in everlaſting burnings, in torments that know no intermiſſion, no end? "Watch therefore, becauſe ye know "neither the day nor the hour, wherein the Son "of man cometh." And the reaſon here given for watchfulneſs, becauſe we are uncertain of the preciſe time of Chriſt's coming, is the ſecond particular to be conſidered.

You have heard, wherein the chriſtian watchfulneſs conſiſts, and how oppoſite it is to careleſſneſs in ſin, becauſe it watches againſt all ſin, as the chief enemy that would make us unprepared for our Lord's coming. To be always watchful, is the believer's character. He watches againſt every thing that may indiſpoſe him for meeting his Lord with joy, againſt ſin, againſt pleaſure, particularly againſt the pleaſures of ſenſe, remembering the command of Chriſt, Take heed unto yourſelves, leſt at any time your hearts ſhould be overcharged with ſurfeiting and drunkenneſs, and the cares of this life, and ſo that day ſhould come upon you unawares. The believer takes heed not to fall into theſe ſins; he ſets faith and love to watch againſt them, and puts them upon watching with greater vigilance, leſt that day ſhould come upon him unawares. "Watch therefore, becauſe ye know "neither the day nor the hour, wherein the Son

"if

" of man cometh." This motive works ſtrongly upon the believer. He is certain that Chriſt will come, and being uncertain of the time, he knows not how ſoon it may be, and therefore he watches always. He conſiders himſelf as fix'd upon a certain ſtation, where he muſt ſtand upon guard and do his duty, until he be called off and relieved. While he is upon this poſt, he is to watch. If the centinel leave his ſtation, or fall aſleep upon it, you know what puniſhment is his due. And will not a greater puniſhment be your due, whoſe eternity depends upon your watching, and yet you cannot watch one hour, no not for the ſake of eternal happineſs? Your own conduct in civil affairs will riſe up in judgment againſt your careleſſneſs in your ſpiritual: for we are now apprehenſive of an invaſion from that faithleſs people, whom God ſuffers to be a ſcourge to the reſt of Europe, and our army is upon the coaſt watching their landing. Now if all the centinels ſhould fall faſt aſleep, and the French ſhould land unobſerved and without oppoſition, I appeal to every honeſt Engliſhman, what ſhall be done to theſe traitors? If the court martial ſhould ſentence every one of them to be ſhot, I ſuppoſe no lover of his country would think this puniſhment too ſevere. I am ſure the believer would not, becauſe he would think himſelf deſerving of death, and knows that he cannot eſcape it, if he leave off watching.

But he will not leave off, becauſe he loves to watch. His heart and his affections go along with his duty. Love is active and vigilant. It will keep him awake: for he does not watch againſt an enemy, but waits for a friend. He watches to meet his beloved Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, who has promiſed to come to judgment ſpeedily, and has commanded his faithful ſervants to watch, and has ſpurred them on to greater vigilance, by aſſuring them that the day of judgement ſhall come as a ſnare, and as a thief in the night, upon all them that dwell in the world. And though it come unexpected, yet it ſhall not find the believer unprepared. The uncertainty of the time will not weaken his belief of the certainty of the fact, but will be a powerful motive to ſpur him on to be always watching and praying, that he may be accounted worthy to eſcape all thoſe things that are to come to paſs at the laſt day. And thus he fulfills Chriſt's direction, " watch therefore, for ye " neither know the day nor the hour, wherein " the Son of man cometh."

Men and brethren, let me ſpeak freely unto you concerning this ſcripture. It is of great and of eternal importance, and you ought to examine your hearts, and ſee how it operates in your lives. Are you then watching? And do you watch the more carefully, becauſe ye know neither the day nor the hour, wherein the Son of man

man cometh? Look around you, and conſider your ſituation. You are upon the verge of eternity. The joys of heaven and the torments of hell are before you. And you are not ſure of a day longer to provide for them. Time flies. Death approaches. Behold the Judge ſtandeth before the door. The late extraordinary providences proclaim his near approach. By the mouths of theſe his harbingers and fore-runners he ſpeaks aloud, ſurely I come quickly. In a moment you may meet him in judgment. And is all this nothing to you? Will it be the ſame thing to you, whether you live in heaven or in hell for ever? Certainly eternal torment cannot be a deſirable thing, and how then do you quiet your conſciences, while you are in danger of it. If you are going on careleſs in your ſins you cannot eſcape it. How can the devil delude you ſo far, and give you ſuch ſtupifying opiates, that you either do not ſee how near you are to everlaſting miſery, or elſe do not fear it? Your caſe is almoſt deſperate; may the eternal Spirit open your eyes to ſee it, before it be too late. God has commanded you to watch, you do not watch. He has required you to be always ready, you are not ready. He has threatened to come in a day when ye look not for him, and you go on careleſs in your ſins, neglecting his threatenings. He is now alarming a careleſs world with his judgments, but they make no

impreſſion upon you. He has ſent war and peſtilence to rouſe you out of your ſecurity, you are not alarmed. He has ariſen to ſhake terribly the earth, you are not moved. He has come to take vengeance on a guilty race, and has puniſhed them with a moſt exemplary deſtruction, but you are not affected. He has overthrown large and populous cities, which are now nothing but heaps of wide-extended ruin, all this makes no impreſſion upon you. Although many thouſands of their inhabitants be buried under the ruins, yet you neither feel for yourſelves, nor for your fellow creatures, whom vengeance ſuffered not to live. Oh hardened inſenſible ſinners! your hearts are more obdurate than the nether millſtone: for what could the almighty God do more to alarm you, than he has done? And yet how few of you are alarmed? This ſtrange ſtupidity and hardneſs of your hearts will ſoon bring down ſome heavy calamity upon you: for if you ſtill return to your ſins, refuſing to repent, although you ſee the arm of juſtice lifted up to deſtroy impenitent ſinners, what can you expect but that it ſhould fall next upon your guilty heads, and that you, who would not cry for mercy at ſuch a time as this, ſhall receive judgment without mercy? And of this be ye aſſured, that the longer mercy withholds the blow, the heavier will it fall, when the long ſuffering of God is wearied out, and his almighty juſtice comes

comes to be glorified in your deſtruction. Oh that this may never happen, but that he may be glorified in your ſalvation. May he give you grace no longer to abuſe his goodneſs and forbearance, but now to leave your ſins, and while his judgments are in the earth to learn righteouſneſs, that you may receive juſtification to life by the all-perfect righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.

Happy will it be for you and me, if by any means I may prevail with you to flee from the wrath to come. God is now pleading with you. He calls aloud to you by various judgments to repent. And it is my heart's deſire to ſecond his call, and to be uſeful under him in ſtiring you up to repentance. I think the miniſters of the goſpel cannot be too earneſt and importunate at ſuch a time as this. When God is pleading powerfully with ſinners, and yet we ſee them ſleeping on in ſecurity, ſurely we ſhould then cry aloud and ſpare not. The heavier the ſpirit of ſlumber is upon them, the more pains ſhould we take to awaken them. And

It is indeed amazing to ſee how hardened and inſenſible mankind are under theſe remarkable providences, with which the world is now viſited. None of theſe have moved them. This ſtrange ſtupidity is an evident ſign of their total corruption, and is the forerunner of their total deſtruction. Mercies have been long tried, but in vain. Now

Now the Almighty tries his terrors, and ſtill in vain. Neither his mercies nor judgments can awaken them. They will not break off their favourite ſins and pleaſures, no not when they ſee his glittering ſword drawn, and cutting off many thouſands at one ſtroke. They have not ſenſe to apply it, and to aſk themſelves, Suppoſe the ſword of the Almighty ſhould be turned againſt me next, am not I as great a ſinner as any of thoſe who periſhed in the late earthquakes? What would become of me, if I ſhould be cut off in a moment, as they were? Alas! my body and ſoul would be miſerable for ever and ever. My conſcience is awake, and aſſures me that I cannot eſcape the wrath to come, unleſs I get my ſins pardoned, and ſecure an intereſt in the Judge of all the earth. This I will ſeek night and day with prayers and tears until I find it. May the Lord Jeſus put theſe good reſolutions into the heart of every careleſs ſinner, and may he give you grace to carry them into execution immediately; to which I ſhall encourage you under two or three ſhort remarks, which I have to make on what has been ſaid.

And firſt you have heard, that it is of the ſpirit of chriſtianity, to make believers watch for their Lord's coming; and it keeps them always watching, becauſe they know not, when he will come; and when the judgments of God

are upon the earth, as they are remarkably at preſent, then it inſpires them with ſtricter watchfulneſs. The greater the danger is, the more watchful are they. You hear what has been offered upon theſe heads, but being determined not to give up your ſins, it does not affect you. You are as cold and lifeleſs, as if I had been talking upon a ſubject, in which you were no way concerned. Would to God there were none of you in this ſtate. How many ſoever careleſs ſinners might come here to day, I wiſh not one of them was to go away without finding ſome uneaſineſs of conſcience, and ſome true, and deep, and laſting conviction of ſin. If any of you leave the church with as much careleſſneſs as you come, how do you ſtupify yourſelves, that no ſenſe of danger can alarm you? Lord what is man, yea ſinful man, that he ſhould think himſelf ſafe, when the earth has been for many days quaking and trembling, and he knows not but in a moment he may be ſwallowed up and called to judgment. How can you dream of ſafety at ſuch a time as this? Perhaps you may diſmiſs your fears by promiſing them, that our country is not ſo ſubject to earthquakes, as other places. When providence orders no country can be free from them. We have had two earthquakes in this city, and though but a little while ago, yet they are now almoſt forgotten, and ſince we take no warning from them, he who ſent theſe

two

two can ſend a third, and London may ſhare the fate of Liſbon. So that this motive by which you try to quiet your conſciences ſhould alarm them the more, becauſe the leſs common earthquakes are in this country, the more certainly ought they to affect you, and yet you are not affected at all. But perhaps you think you need not be under any great apprehenſions, becauſe earthquakes are only natural effects produced by natural cauſes. Be it ſo. What ſecurity do you get by this? Has the God of nature no influence upon theſe natural cauſes? Suppoſing he had none, which is atheiſm to ſuppoſe, and a natural cauſe ſhould deſtroy you and ſend you to hell, would this make your torments more ſupportable? If you could go and tell the poor ſinners who periſhed at Liſbon, that it was not providence which deſtroyed them, but only a natural cauſe, what good news would this be to them? They are deſtroyed and loſt for ever, and the cauſe of the earthquake is of no conſequence to them? They are only concerned about the effects of it, and would now give thouſands of worlds, if they had them, that they had been found watching. And ſo will you, if you take not warning from their deſtruction. They are loſt: but you have ſtill an offer of mercy. You may eſcape if you will look more into yourſelves, than into the cauſes of this earthquake. Look at the one thing

needful

needful for you. Repent. Get your ſins pardoned. Make Good your friend; and then you will be ſafe. Let little infidel philoſophers ſay what they pleaſe, be ye aſſured, that providence orders and directs even what are called natural cauſes. And when you are reconciled to him, he will make them all work together for your good. What he ſends for judgments to others will be mercies to you, and you will experience his love in every viſitation, be it proſperous or adverſe. Whoever has attained to the true ſpirit of chriſtian watchfulneſs is in this ſtate, and to them who deſire to attain it I will make my ſecond remark.

I am now ſpeaking to theſe perſons who are alarmed at the ſigns of the times, and begin to be concerned about the ſalvation of their ſouls. You want to have your hearts eſtabliſhed, that you may not be afraid of any evil tidings, but whenever your Lord comes may be found watching. He that put this good deſire into your minds, will place you ſecure upon the rock of ages, if you wait upon him. When you are once united to Jeſus Chriſt by faith, you are then out of the reach of every calamity. Nothing can hurt you: for the guilt of ſin, from whence all your danger comes, is taken out of the conſcience. You know that your heavenly father loves you in his beloved ſon, and that he will keep you in the arms of his mercy in life,

and

and death, and to eternity. Being aſſured of this, then you can watch; you will love to be watching, and whenever your Lord comes you will be ready to enter in with him into his joys. This is chriſtian watchfulneſs. It is always prepared, always looking out for death and judgment, and therefore is never ſurprized. And in this happy ſtate all believers live, and there is no happineſs upon earth but this. All the reſt is but a ſhadow of joy, and in the end proves vanity and vexation of ſpirit. The thought that they muſt die, gives a damp to the higheſt pleaſures of careleſs ſinners; but the thought that they may die in the midſt of their enjoyments, turns their fancied pleaſures into real pains. Nothing can make life ſweet and happy, but a conſtant preparation for death. And ſince God has led you to ſeek this happineſs in Jeſus Chriſt, ſeek it in the right way, and you will aſſuredly find it. Go to the throne of grace with humility and prayer. Pray without ceaſing. Be importunate. Knock at the door of mercy until it be opened. Hear and read the word of God. Frequent his table. Be found in all the ways of his ordinances, and he will be found of you. He will give you living faith working by divine love, and with theſe graces your hearts will be ſtrengthened, and enabled to watch, until your Lord come. And to thoſe who are in this happy ſtate I make my third and laſt remark.

My

My chriſtian brethren, your Lord's command ſhould be much in your thoughts at preſent, Be watchful. You find none of his commands grievous: for love has made them all pleaſant, and to keep them with a watchful ſpirit is become your delight. Faith and hope enable you to look out for Chriſt's coming without any fear or dread, and love makes watching for it ſweet and joyful. It is a pleaſure to you to meditate upon his coming. You can reflect with joy upon that bleſſed day, when you ſhall ſee the dear object of your affections, ſhall behold him in all the glory of the Godhead, and ſhall be admitted into his preſence, where is the fulneſs of everlaſting joys. Oh! there is heaven in theſe reflections. The happineſs you find in them diſpoſes you earneſtly to wiſh and pray for the great day of your Lord's appearing. And his repeated commands to you to watch for it, keep you watchful. It would be no ſurprize to you, if you were this moment to lift up your eyes, and to ſee the crucified Jeſus coming in the clouds with power and great glory, to hear the loud trump of God calling you to judgment, and to behold the dead riſing out of their graves, the earth in flames, and to feel yourſelves caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Are not theſe hopes the joy of your hearts? I know they are. You long to meet your beloved Lord and Saviour. And are you all in this happy

ſituation?

ſituation? Say. Have you ſuch pure and perfect love for the judge of all the earth, that you wiſh, and pray, and watch for his coming. Aſk your conſciences, as if I put the queſtion to every one of you by name, is this your caſe? Every true believer can, without preſumption declare: Glory be to God, it is my happy ſituation; through grace I wait for the coming of my moſt bleſſed and adorable Saviour, and in his ſtrength I now watch, and hope, whenever he comes, to be found watching. Oh that his good Spirit may bring every one of you into this watchful frame and temper of mind, and may he enable you all now to aſk it of him in the prayer of faith, and I know of no words more ſuitable to the ſubject, or more truly pious, than theſe which our church has taught us to uſe on this day.

"O Lord Jeſu Chriſt, who at thy firſt coming
"didſt ſend thy meſſengers to prepare thy way
"before thee: Grant that the miniſters and
"ſtewards of thy myſteries, may likewiſe ſo pre-
"pare and make ready thy way, by turning
"the hearts of the diſobedient, to the wiſdom
"of the juſt, that at thy ſecond coming to judge
"the world, we may (all be watching and pray-
"ing, and may therefore) be found an accepta-
"ble people in thy ſight, who liveſt and reigneſt
"with the Father and the holy Spirit, ever, one
"God, world without end. *Amen.*"

HYMN.

HYMN.

THOU Judge of quick and dead,
Before whoſe bar ſevere,
With holy joy, or guilty dread,
We all ſhall ſoon appear:
Our caution'd ſouls prepare
For that tremendous day,
And fill us now with watchful care,
And ſtir us up to pray:

Give us with faith to wait
The awful hour unknown,
When robed in glory and in ſtate
Thou ſhalt from heaven come down,
Th' immortal ſon of man,
To judge the human race,
With all thy father's dazzling train,
With all thy glorious grace.

To damp our earthly joys,
T' increaſe our gracious fears,
For ever let th' Archangel's voice
Be ſounding in our ears,
The ſolemn midnight cry,
'Ye dead, the Judge is come!
'Ariſe, and meet him in the ſky,
'And meet your inſtant doom!'

O may we thus be found
Obedient to his word,
Attentive to the trumpet's ſound,
And watching for our Lord;
O may we thus inſure
Our Lot among the bleſt,
And watch a moment to ſecure
An everlaſting reſt.

12 JY 62

A

SERMON

PREACHED

AT ST. ANN's, BLACK-FRIARS,

ON SUNDAY, SEPT. 30, 1764.

God forbid that I ſhould glory, ſave in the Croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. GAL. vi. 14.


BRITISH MUSEUM

TO THE

PARISHIONERS

OF

ST. ANNE BLACK-FRIARS,

WHO NOMINATED ME A CANDIDATE FOR THEIR RECTORY,

ON WHICH OCCASION

THIS SERMON

WAS PREACHED, AND AT WHOSE REQUEST IT IS

PUBLISHED,

IS HUMBLY DEDICATED,

BY THEIR SERVANT, FOR JESUS SAKE,

W. ROMAINE.

BRITISH MUSEUM

A

SERMON.

2 Cor. iv. 5.

We preach not ourſelves, but Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, and ourſelves your ſervants for Jeſus ſake.

THE apoſtle ſpeaks theſe words of himſelf, and of Timothy. He is clearing their office, and their character from the charges brought againſt them by ſome falſe teachers in the church of Corinth. In the foregoing chapter, he has been comparing the miniſtry of the law with the miniſtry of the goſpel, and ſtating the difference between them. The law was written on tables of ſtone, and was the miniſtration of death and of condemnation, but the goſpel was written upon the fleſhly tables of the heart, being the miniſtration of the Spirit, and of righteouſneſs, and therefore whatever glory the law had, the goſpel did far exceed it in glory. Paul and Timothy being appointed preachers of this moſt glorious goſpel, and having received this miniſtry,

did not faint through any difficulty or oppoſition, nor did they labor in it upon any corrupt ſelfiſh motives: For they renounced the hidden things of diſhoneſty, every baſe principle that would not bear the light, not walking in craftineſs, with an intention through ſubtlety, to cheat their hearers, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, on purpoſe to deceive and beguile unſtable ſouls; but they acted openly and honeſtly, by manifeſtation of the truth commending themſelves to every man's conſcience in the ſight of God, making the truth ſo plain, and their views in preaching it ſo noble and diſintereſted, that every man's conſcience rightly informed muſt approve of them; but however God ſaw the ſecrets of their hearts, and to him they could appeal for the uprightneſs of their motives, ſo that if there were any who did not receive their goſpel, it was their own fault, and was a ſad proof of their being in a loſt eſtate: For if our goſpel be hid, it is hid to them who are loſt, who are under the power of the devil and of unbelief, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not: This is the grand ſtratagem of Satan. Wherever the goſpel comes, he tries to blind and harden men's minds againſt it, knowing well, that if the light of the glorious goſpel of Chriſt, who is the image of God, ſhould ſhine into them, there would be an end of his reign; therefore he labors with wiles and force

force to ſhut out the light of the goſpel, that he may continue to rule in the evil heart of unbelief. But bleſſed be God, the preaching of the goſpel is the means of dethroning Satan: He fears no weapon formed againſt him, but the two-edged ſword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. With this he has been defeated thouſands and thouſands of times: For it is the appointed inſtrument of bringing ſinners out of darkneſs into light, and from the power of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son. And the Lord works this mighty deliverance by the preaching of the goſpel. When the able miniſters of the New Teſtament have a ſingle eye to Chriſt, and aim ſolely at his glory, then the holy Spirit ſets in with their words, and according to his office, glorifies Chriſt in the underſtanding, and in the hearts of the hearers. Of this, St. Paul had long and happy experience. He was enabled to renounce ſelf in all his miniſtrations, and to exalt Jeſus—We preach not ourſelves—We diſclaim ſelf in all its ſhapes. We renounce ſelf-ſeeking and ſelf-pleaſing. We abhor ſelfiſh views. We would have ſelf debaſed, and in all our preaching, we would have ſelf brought to nought, that Chriſt may be ALL in ALL. "We preach not ourſelves, but Chriſt "Jeſus the Lord"—Of his wonderful perſon, God-man—Of his gracious undertakings—Of his divine offices—Of his finiſhed ſalvation—Of his

his almighty power and faithfulneſs to carry all the purpoſes of his love into execution, that his people may be receiving out of his fulneſs grace in time, and glory in eternity—Of theſe things we would be telling all the day long. He is the ſubject matter, his glory is the end and aim of all our preaching; and if he be but glorified and ſouls won to him, we have reward enough. His love conſtraineth us to love him the head of the body, and to love all his members; for his ſake ready to do any good office to the ſouls or bodies of mankind. "Ourſelves your ſervants "for Jeſus ſake, willing to do, willing to ſuffer any thing for you, to ſpend and be ſpent, yea, not counting our lives dear to ourſelves, ſo that we may but finiſh our courſe with joy, and the miniſtry which we have received of the Lord Jeſus, to teſtify the goſpel of the grace of God. The apoſtle's words thus in part opened and explained, will be ſuitable to the preſent occaſion in theſe two views,

Firſt, As they relate more immediately to miniſters, and

Secondly, To their people.

Under the firſt head, theſe particulars offer themſelves to our conſideration,

Firſt, Paul and Timothy did not preach themſelves, but

Secondly, They preached Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, and

Thirdly, Themſelves ſervants to the Corinthians for Jeſus ſake. And may the grace of our God enable us ſo to meditate upon theſe points, that ſelf may be humbled and the Saviour exalted: For

Firſt, Paul and Timothy did not, and miniſters ought not to preach themſelves. They ought not to have an eye to ſelf in any part of their work. Self is a wrong object. It cannot be lookt at, without forgetting Chriſt, or made any thing of without degrading Chriſt. Where ſelf is an idol, Chriſt is become nothing. Therefore a miniſter, whoſe heart is devoted to Chriſt, and would with his lips and life glorify him, is ever afraid of ſelf. In his preaching he would not aim at thoſe things, which feed and nouriſh ſelfiſhneſs, ſuch as

Fame, which is an univerſal paſſion. Self loves to be eſteemed, and to be called of men, rabbi, great, and noble, and learned, and good. There is nothing, which our corrupt nature covets more than to be well ſpoken of, and to have every bodies good word: For this applauſe wonderfully feeds all our ſelfiſh tempers. But this St. Paul was enabled to renounce for Chriſt. He was once a famous ſcholar, but he loſt his character for determining to know nothing, but Jeſus and him crucified. He had once great reputation for holineſs, but there was an end of it, when he came to his—" God forbid that I ſhould glory, " except

" except in the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt." He did not deſire now to be admired for a fine orator, nor did he preach for this end, that his hearers might be pleaſed with him, and go away pleaſed with themſelves, but he was bold for God to ſpeak plain truths, which he knew would offend thoſe who were living, and wanted to live in their ſins. When he inſiſted upon the doctrine of the croſs, which is to them that periſh fooliſhneſs, then bad deſigns were imputed to him, and the abandoned ſinner and the ſelf-righteous phariſee agreed to look upon him, as the ſcum of the world, and the offſcouring of all things. And this he did not deſerve, he did not ſeek it; but he met with it in the ſervice of Chriſt. It was the reproach of Chriſt, brought upon him for ſerving ſuch a maſter, and heightened for his being ſo like his maſter. And yet in this Paul could rejoice—not only bear it, but alſo glory in it. He received it as an honor, and found it a bleſſing, to be evil ſpoken of for Jeſus ſake. He was happy in bringing ſinners to think and ſpeak well of Jeſus, whatever evil ſome might think and ſpeak of him for it. O for more of this ſelf-denying ſpirit. May the Lord pull down ſelf in all his miniſters, that Jeſus alone may be exalted in them, and by them, and that they may not ſtudy in their miniſtry filthy lucre, any more than baſely purchaſed fame.

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This is another ſelfiſh principle. The love of money, which is the root of all evil, is deeply rooted in every man's heart. They all look to their own way, every one for his gain from his quarter; but by the grace of God, Paul was of another mind. In his doctrine, he inſiſts upon it, to Timothy and Titus, that miniſters ſhould not be given to filthy lucre, and in his example he ſhewed, that he was not given to it himſelf. When he went to Epheſus, he did not go upon any ſordid motive, ſuch as, How much a year ſhall I get by preaching at that place? His view was very exalted—How ſhall I ſerve the cauſe of Jeſus, and his dear-bought people there: Accordingly he ſays to the Epheſians, "I have "coveted no man's ſilver, or gold, or apparel, "yea, you yourſelves know, that theſe hands "have miniſtered to my neceſſities, and to them "that were with me." As he was a preacher of the goſpel he had a right to live of the goſpel, yet he waved his right, and choſe rather to work at his trade, than it ſhould be ſaid he preached for gain. Chriſt being his Saviour, and the unſearchable riches of Chriſt his portion and his inheritance, he had enough: For he had not only the promiſe of ſpiritual, but alſo of temporal things, ſuch as the love of Chriſt knew beſt for him; and he found Chriſt ſo faithful, that he learnt in whatever ſtate he was therewith to be content,

content, content to be abaſed, to be hungry, and to ſuffer need, yea content to ſuffer the loſs of all things, counting them but droſs and dung, that he might win Chriſt: And having won him, the pearl of great price, he was willing to part with his eaſe, as well as fame and riches for Jeſus ſake.

This is another very ſelfiſh principle. We all love eaſe, and ſelf-indulgence. Our nature abhors the leaſt ſuffering. What noble views then muſt Paul have been actuated by, ſince he knew, that in every city bonds and afflictions did abide him, and yet none of theſe things did move him? How dear and precious muſt Chriſt have been to him, ſince the continual croſs could not drive him from preaching the goſpel of Chriſt? He made a mere ſlave of his body, denying it the deareſt gratifications, even lawful ones, and laying upon it the heavieſt burdens and croſſes, when his Lords cauſe required theſe things at his hands. Like a good ſoldier he endured hardſhip, was in perils often, in wearineſs and painfulneſs, in watchings often, in hunger and thirſt, in faſtings often, in cold and nakedneſs. Such was his flaming love to him, who had called him to be a ſoldier, that no ſuffering could make him leave the ſervice: He fought on bravely, ſtrong in the Lord, till the battle being won, the captain of his ſalvation granted him his diſcharge,

and

and put upon his head a crown of glory, that fadeth not away.

Thus Paul made it appear, that he did not preach himſelf. He renounced thoſe things, which are deareſt to ſelf, and ſhewed how much he loved Jeſus, by willingly parting with applauſe, and riches, and eaſe for his ſake, " we " preach not ourſelves, but Chriſt Jeſus the " Lord," which is the

Second particular to be conſidered. St. Paul diſclaimed ſelf, that he might exalt the Saviour. He did this from a true heart-felt attachment to Jeſus. " When it pleaſed God," ſays he, " to " reveal his Son in me, immediately I conferred " not with fleſh and blood: From that time forward he became enamored with the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus his Lord. Paul found Chriſt revealed in him ſo precious, he ſaw ſuch wonderful beauty and matchleſs lovelineſs in him, ſuch an infinite fulneſs, and ſuch a readineſs to communicate out of it all ſpiritual bleſſings; yea, he himſelf enjoyed ſo many of them, that other things were nothing, and Chriſt was ALL. He had won Paul's heart. He had diſcovered ſo much of himſelf, that Paul was become in body and ſoul devoted to him, and cared not what he ſuffered ſo that he could but pleaſe his Lord and Saviour. To his honor he had an eye in all his miniſterial labours, ſetting forth the perfect freeneſs, the rich fulneſs, and

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the everlaſting glory of his ſalvation. We preach Jeſus; that name is full of grace: for he was called Jeſus, becauſe he was to ſave his people from their ſins. They had all turned away from God and his law, as the prophet ſays, "All we "like ſheep have gone aſtray, we have turned "every one to his own way," and this was the way of ſin, according to the apoſtle, "All have "ſinned and come ſhort of the glory of God," they had all robbed God of his glory by tranſgreſſing his law, ſo that there was none righteous, no not one, and thereby they had all rendered themſelves liable to thoſe threatened pains and penalties, which juſtice was bound to inflict: for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven againſt all unrighteouſneſs. from this ſtate of ſin and miſery Jeſus came to ſave his people; and this he undertook in the covenant of the eternal Three, in which, being a perſon coequal and coeternal with the Father, he agreed to ſtand up as the head and ſurety of his people, in their nature and in their ſtead to keep the law for them, and to ſuffer the pains and penalties of it for them, that by his obedience unto death, the law and juſtice of his Father might be infinitely and everlaſtingly glorified in ſaving all thoſe who ſhould believe in him from ſin and death and hell, and in admitting them to life and glory. In the fulneſs of time he came to fulfill what he had undertaken, and the word was made

made fleſh. "Lo, I come, ſaith he, to do thy "will, O God," to do it in my life, to ſuffer it in my death, and thereby to bring in an everlaſting righteouſneſs for my people. The Father accepted him as their ſurety, witneſſing by a voice from heaven—"This is my beloved Son, "in whom I am well pleaſed," and witneſſing alſo that as their ſurety he had finiſhed the work, which he had given him to do, when he declared him to be the Son of God with power by his reſurrection from the dead, and when he put all things under his feet, and gave him all power in heaven and earth, that he might be able to ſave ſinners to the uttermoſt—were they ever ſo far from God that he might bring them nigh—if they had ſinned to the uttermoſt, ſo far that one ſtep more they would have been in hell, yet he could ſave them ſtill with his great ſalvation: for he is exalted to be a prince and a Saviour, that the worſt and vileſt may in him be ſaved from all their ſins, no ſins being ſo ſinful, ſo numerous, but there is redemption from all through faith in his blood, no ſtate of guilt ſo deſperate, but he can beſtow grace, that ſin ſhall not be imputed, and that righteouſneſs, even the righteouſneſs of God ſhall be imputed. Such a Saviour is Jeſus, exalted to this office by the covenant of grace, and acting in it by the full commiſſion of the eternal Three; by whom he was conſtituted the Chriſt. Thus ſaith the Father,

Father, " God the Lord, the creator of heaven " and earth, I the Lord have called thee in " righteouſneſs, and will hold thy hand, and will " keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of " the people."—With Chriſt the covenant was made, by him it was to be made good, and therefore the ſecond perſon in the Godhead was truly united unto him, and God and man was one Chriſt, and the holy Spirit was poured upon him without meaſure to fit and qualify him for his work, that he might become the Saviour of his people, as their prophet, prieſt, and king; for which offices he was divinely commiſſioned and conſecrated, and therefore was called the Chriſt, or the annointed one of God.

As he was the great High Prieſt of our profeſſion, he was called of God to offer gifts and ſacrifices for ſin: and he gave himſelf, his Godhead, his manhood, as the ſurety of his people, to his Father's law, that whatever demands of obedience it had upon them, he might anſwer and pay them all, to the end that by his obedience they might be made righteous. And he gave himſelf as their ſurety to his Father's juſtice, that whatever demands of ſufferings it had upon them, he might endure them all, and accordingly the Lord laid upon him the ſins of all his people. He knew no ſin. He was in himſelf juſt, when he ſuffered for the unjuſt, and therefore all his ſufferings were upon their account. He was

bearing

bearing their griefs and carrying their ſorrows in every part of his paſſion. For them he was ſtricken, ſmitten of God and afflicted. He felt what the ſins of their ſouls deſerved, when he cried out, "My ſoul is exceeding ſorrowful, even unto death;" and he felt the ſins of their bodies, when the burden forced him to ſweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground. They were bound with the chains of ſin, and ought to have been bound with chains of everlaſting darkneſs, therefore when Jeſus was apprehended they took him and bound him. For that ſhame which was due to their ſins he turned not away his face from ſhame and ſpitting, nor his cheeks from them that plucked off the hair. He was buffeted and ſcourged, and ſtricken for their tranſgreſſions, that by his ſtripes they might be healed. For the ſins of their heads his holy head was crowned with thorns. Their feet were ſwift to run into ſin, and their hands mighty to commit it, therefore when the Lord laid upon him the iniquities of them all, his feet and his hands were pierced through with nails. There never was ſorrow like unto that ſorrow, wherewith the Lord afflicted him in the day of his fierce anger, when he endured the curſe to redeem his people from the curſe of the law, when he was forſaken of God, that they who deſerved to be forſaken for ever might be brought nigh to God, and when he bowed his

head

head and gave up the ghoſt, dying for them that they might live with God for ever. Thus he was made ſin for them, who knew no ſin, and thus he put away ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf, and by this alone can it be put away. God hath laid no other foundation for the ſalvation of ſinners, than the finiſhed work, the life and death, the blood and righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt. When you heard the miniſter juſt now give notice that the ſacrament would be adminiſtered next Sunday, he ſaid, it was in remembrance of the meritorious croſs and paſſion of Chriſt, "whereby alone," mind that, "whereby alone "we obtain remiſſion of our ſins, and are made "partakers of the kingdom of heaven," whereby alone we are ſaved from hell, and entitled to heaven. Whatever grace or glory God the Father gives to any poor ſinners he gives it on this account, and on nothing elſe. He looks only at what his Son did and ſuffered, when he vouchſafes to bring any of them from darkneſs to light, and from ſin to righteouſneſs. He ſees them in his Son, and accepts them in the Beloved. They ſtand at his bar in the righteouſneſs of his Son, and are therefore juſtified from all things. He views them in the graces and lovelineſs of his Son, and they appear not only without ſpot or blemiſh, or any ſuch thing, but alſo fair as the moon, clear as the ſun---complete in Jeſus: and therefore it is owing to the precious gifts and

infinitely

infinitely meritorious offerings of the great high prieſt of our profeſſion Chriſt Jeſus, and to theſe alone, that any ſinners are pardoned and ſaved: becauſe there is ſalvation in none other, either perſon or thing.

But becauſe this way of ſalvation through faith in a crucified Saviour was a ſtumbling block unto the Jews, and unto the Greeks' fooliſhneſs, and is not received to this day except by thoſe to whom it is given, therefore the Lord Chriſt ſuſtains another gracious office, and is the great teacher of his people. He is the divine prophet, of whom it is written, "In the latter days they "ſhall be all taught of God:" for by his word and Spirit he brings his people to an heart-felt diſcovery of their own guilty ſtate and ruined nature, and teaches them the infinite ſufficiency of his finiſhed work, and enables them with the heart to reſt upon it, as the alone foundation of preſent peace and of eternal joy. This is the great leſſon, which he has to teach us, as our prophet, and none can teach it but himſelf. Men may give one another ſome notion of the way of ſalvation, but they can go no farther. Chriſt only can teach, as never man taught. The words, which he ſpeaks, they are Spirit and they are life. The Spirit accompanies them with his divine power and energy, and by them he quickens the ſoul, that was before dead in treſpaſſes and ſins. He ſpeaks life into the dead,

and the life which he gives, being from him, is to bring the ſoul to him, that it may be kept alive by living upon his fulneſs: for this Jeſus is the Chriſt, conſecrated of God to be the great prophet of his people, and made of God unto them wiſdom, that he might inſtruct them all in ſaving knowledge, by bringing them to reſt wholly by faith upon his life and death for every grace and every bleſſing.

And becauſe there is in our fallen nature a proneneſs to turn from Jeſus, and to reſt upon ſomething beſides him alone for righteouſneſs and ſtrength, and for a comfortable and holy walk heavenwards, therefore Jeſus is the almighty king to rule in and over his people, and to manage all their matters ſpiritual and temporal for them. And for this purpoſe he has all power in heaven and earth, that whatever would turn them from him, enemies within or without, he might be able to ſubdue them all. Having brought them to himſelf, and fixed them upon the foundation, he is the Chriſt, the conſecrated king to keep them there by his almighty arm. They are now become his lawful ſubjects, and no enemy, not even the gates of hell ſhall pluck them out of his hands, and they know it, and are therefore ſafe and happy. Surely, can they ſay in the Lord have we ſtrength. In the midſt of their weakneſs and helpleſſneſs he makes his ſtrength perfect, the excellency of it never ap-

pearing ſo manifeſt, as when he keeps them ſenſible that without him they can do nothing, and yet then enables them through him to do all things.

Happy are the people, who are in ſuch a caſe, yea, bleſſed are the people, who have Jeſus Chriſt for their king: becauſe he is the Lord, that is Jehovah, we preach Chriſt Jeſus the Lord. This crowns all. Jeſus is Jehovah, one of the eternal Three in the Godhead, coequal and coeternal with the Father, and with the Holy Spirit, poſſeſſed of all the divine attributes and perfections. All his works are perfect, infinitely, everlaſtingly perfect. His work of ſalvation is abſolutely complete. Jehovah hath laid the foundation: Jehovah hath brought forth the top ſtone. It is the maſterpiece of his wiſdom, and power, and love, to which nothing can be added, and from which nothing may be taken away: for God was in Chriſt, and finiſhed the work. "Thus ſaith the Lord, I am Jeho-"vah, and beſides me there is no Saviour," no Jeſus, therefore Jeſus is Jehovah; as he ſays himſelf to the Jews—"If ye believe not that I "AM, ye ſhall die in your ſins." Now none can forgive ſins but God only, and therefore Jeſus muſt be God, becauſe he had power upon earth to forgive ſins. The prophet Iſaiah ſays, "Unto us a child is born, and he ſhall be called "the mighty God"—mind, the child was God,

the infant child juſt born was the almighty God ---According to the apoſtle, "God over all "bleſſed for ever." This is the fundamental article of our religion. Take this away, chriſtians are as great idolaters, as they are, who worſhip ſtocks and ſtones: for if Jeſus be not Jehovah, if God and man be not in him one Chriſt, of what idolatry have you been guilty this morning? The whole litany is a prayer to Chriſt. In the creeds which you have been repeating, you have acknowledged his Godhead. In the liturgy are theſe words:---"The ſame that we believe of the "glory of the Father, the ſame we believe of "the glory of the Son and of the Holy Ghoſt, "without any difference or inequality." Therefore againſt all oppoſers we muſt inſiſt upon the equality of the Perſons in the Godhead. We muſt preach Chriſt Jeſus the Lord---Jeſus a perfect Saviour, conſecrated to his office by the covenant of the eternal Three, and acting in it, as the great High Prieſt, who was to offer gifts and ſacrifices for the ſins of his people, and to teach them, as their prophet, to rely wholly upon him for the infinite and everlaſting efficacy of theſe gifts and offerings to take away ſin, and to obtain ſalvation; and to truſt to his royal power that they might be kept by it, until they ſhould receive the end of their faith, even the ſalvation of their ſouls. And we are to inſiſt upon it, that Jeſus is the Chriſt, able to fulfill all thoſe

offices, becauſe he is Jehovah, the Lord God omnipotent, who therefore took fleſh and was made man, that as man's ſurety he might live and die for him, making in his life and death reconciliation for iniquity, and bringing in everlaſting righteouſneſs. This was the Lord's doing; whoſe works are like himſelf. They are all infinite, and therefore the ſalvation of our God is everlaſtingly perfect. And it is offered freely in the goſpel, not to him that worketh, but to him that believeth, which ſhews the rich fulneſs, and abſolute ſufficiency of it. Is not that plainly a divine liberality, which can make ſuch a free grant as this—Whoſoever will let him come and take the grace of God, and the glory of God freely. And obſerve to whom the free grant is made—To any that will receive it. To any ſinner, be he ever ſo vile, if he be black as hell, heavy laden with a burden that would ſink thouſands of thouſands of ſouls into the bottomleſs pit, labouring under the guilt of ſins as numerous as the ſand upon the ſea-ſhore, to ſuch an one is the word of this ſalvation ſent. He may come juſt as he is: for all things are ready, ready for ſinners, yea for the chief, to cleanſe, to juſtify, to ſanctify, to glorify them. Whoever he be, he that believeth ſhall be ſaved, and ſhall be kept by the power of God through faith, until he be made a partaker of the eternal ſalvation of God.

Thus

Thus we preach Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, directing ſinners to look nowhere, but to him—"Behold the Lamb of God." Look unto him, and be ye ſaved, all ye ends of the earth. And this is the good news of the goſpel, which after miniſters have experienced themſelves, then will they be able clearly and feelingly to preach it to others: for then the love of Chriſt will conſtrain them. The work of the miniſtry may be hard, the difficulties many and great, but his love in their hearts will make them willing to do, and ſuffer any thing for his glory, and for the good of his people, which is the

Third particular under this head to be conſidered. If we mention any thing about ourſelves, it is to humble ſelf, and to bring honour to Jeſus—"ourſelves your ſervants for Jeſus ſake." In this ordinance of preaching, and in all our miniſterial labours, we are not lords but ſervants, ſervants to our great Lord and Maſter, to whom we ought always to have an eye, and to whom we muſt give an account; and ſervants alſo to you, bound to perform every good office, ready to every work and labour of love, which may promote your ſpiritual and eternal intereſt: for this end we have given up ourſelves to ſerve the Lord Chriſt, and have devoted ourſelves to your ſervice for his ſake; ſo that we ought to refuſe no difficulty or trouble, which his glory or your profit require of us. But in whatever caſe one

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or both theſe ends cannot be promoted, we are acting quite out of character, if we engage in it. And for this reaſon I have not been able to behave towards you in the common way of ſoliciting for your favour. Some have inſinuated it was from pride, that I would not go about the pariſh from houſe to houſe canvaſſing for votes; but truly it was another motive. I could not ſee how this could promote the glory of God. How can it be for the honour of Jeſus, that his miniſters, who have renounced fame, and riches, and eaſe, ſhould be moſt anxious and earneſt in the purſuit of thoſe very things which they have renounced? Surely this would be getting into a worldly ſpirit, as much as is the ſpirit of parliamenteering. And as this method of canvaſſing cannot be for Jeſus ſake, ſo neither is it for our honour: it is far beneath our function: nor is it for your profit. What good is it to your ſouls? What compliment to your underſtandings? What advantage to you in any ſhape to be directed and applied to by every perſon with whom you have any connection, or on whom you have any dependence? Is not this depriving you of the freedom of your choice? Determined by theſe motives, when my friends of their own accord put me up as a candidate, to whom I have to this hour made no application, directly or indirectly, I left you to yourſelves. If you do chooſe me,

I deſire

I deſire to be your ſervant for Jeſus ſake, and if you do not, the will of the Lord be done.

From what hath been ſaid upon the text it appears, that not ſelf, but Chriſt Jeſus the Lord is to be preached. Our ſubject matter is his nature, God-man, full of grace and truth in all his offices. When God was manifeſt in the fleſh, he was called Jeſus, becauſe he was to ſave his people from their ſins, and he was Jeſus the Chriſt, choſen to this office in the covenant of the eternal Three, and conſecrated to be the great teacher and prophet of his church, able by his word and Spirit to make manifeſt the ſecrets of the heart, diſcovering to a man his own fallen ſtate, his guilt, and his miſery, and making him ſo to feel theſe things, as to be forced to go out of himſelf for ſalvation; and alſo to make manifeſt to him, how he may be ſaved through faith in the blood and righteouſneſs of a crucified Saviour, by and in whom alone can be had forgiveneſs of ſins, and an inheritance among them that are ſanctified. Upon this foundation Jeſus is able to eſtabliſh and ground the ſoul, becauſe he has all power in heaven and earth for that very purpoſe: as God-man he reigneth over all, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, until all his enemies be made his footſtool. Not one enemy, not one ſin ſhall have dominion over them, who live by the faith of the Son of God; yea,

yea, he will ſo rule over them, that they ſhall be preſerved from all evil, and he will make all things work together for their good. And for the glory of Chriſt in theſe his offices he beſtows his bleſſings freely, the moſt ignorant he teaches, the greateſt ſinners he juſtifies, the moſt helpleſs he keeps by his mighty power. He is the Saviour of ſuch, not for any merit in them, that is or can be, but to the praiſe of his own grace. He is able to do all this, becauſe he is Jehovah, to whom all things are poſſible, and he does it, becauſe it is his office, his honour to ſave. He is Jeſus, the Saviour, and he is the Chriſt, the conſecrated Saviour, in whom dwelleth the fulneſs of the Godhead, that he might be able to ſave to the uttermoſt, yea, that he might be the author of eternal ſalvation. This is the goſpel which has been preached with ſucceſs by many faithful miniſters in this place, whoſe names are ſtill remembered with honour, and this goſpel is to this day preached unto you, and we deſire to deliver it faithfully, that you may receive it profitably, which brings me to the

Second general head of diſcourſe, namely, to the application to the hearers, which conſiſts in receiving the truths delivered. Preaching is the ordinance of God, which he has appointed, and by which he acts. On which account it is not an indifferent matter, but is either the ſavor of life unto life, or the ſavor of death unto death; there-

therefore our Lord requires you to take heed, how you hear. When Chriſt is evidently ſet forth in the preaching of the goſpel, My word, ſays he, ſhall not return unto me void, but it ſhall accompliſh that which I pleaſe, and it ſhall proſper in the thing whereto I ſend it. The Spirit accompanying it makes it effectual for the accompliſhing of what the Lord pleaſes, and by his mighty working in the word, faith cometh, and Chriſt is received. The ſoul, which was dead, is made alive by the word of life---which was in darkneſs, is enlightened, when the light of the glorious goſpel ſhines into it---which was in guilt, is acquitted by believing the word of righteouſneſs---which was mourning, is made joyful through patience and comfort of the ſcriptures---which being on the foundation yet could do nothing to build up itſelf, is edified and built up by the word of grace in its moſt holy faith. Thus by and in the word the Spirit acts, and Chriſt is received into the judgment, the believer clearly apprehends him, the conſcience is ſatisfied with him, and ſees in his life and death enough to be ſaved from condemnation, and to be entitled to heaven, the will chooſes him, the heart embraces him, and the whole man is influenced to give up himſelf to be governed by the grace of Jeſus, that in ſpirituals, in temporals, for time and for eternity, Jeſus may be ALL, and in ALL.

Now,

Now, Sirs, we therefore preach Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, that you may thus receive him, and be happy in him. We would glorify him in our preaching, that his Spirit may thus glorify him in your hearts and lives. And has he done this for you? Examine: for it is of infinite moment. What does it ſignify to you, how glorious Chriſt is in the eyes of others, if he be not ſo in yours? how bleſſed he makes them, if you be not bleſſed in him? you will be no better for their views of Chriſt, and for their happineſs in him. O think then, why it is, that Chriſt, who is infinitely, ineſtimably, everlaſtingly precious, is not precious to you. It is not becauſe you do not believe? For the ſcripture declares, "to them that believe he is precious." And what keeps you under the power of unbelief? Is it not written, that the God of this world blindeth the minds of them that believe not? He deludes the judgment and hardens the heart through the deceitfulneſs of ſin, inſomuch that they are content with the pleaſures of ſin, which are but for a ſeaſon, and while theſe delight, they feel not their want of a Saviour. If there be any, who hear me now in this dreadful caſe, O think how much you will one day want him! In the time of diſtreſs, when the law accuſes, conſcience condemns, and you ſee the wrath of God to be your due, when the

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arrows of the almighty ſtick deep in you, and his law preſſeth you ſore, how exceedingly deſirable will Jeſus the Saviour then be! But ſuppoſing this day of conviction never come, yet it is appointed unto all men once to die: how will you appear and ſtand at God's bar? With ſin unpardoned? Alas! There is then no way left to eſcape—your ſentence is upon record—Go thou curſed into eternal fire, &c. Sirs, before it be too late think of theſe things, and may God put it into your hearts ſo to think of them, that you may flee from the wrath to come.

Whenever it ſhall pleaſe God thus to make you ſenſible of your want of a Saviour, or if he has already been thus gracious unto you—Remember, Sirs, that Jeſus Chriſt is the Lord Jehovah, and that in our nature he has wrought out a finiſhed ſalvation. Here is your object. The command is—Look unto Jeſus, ſee in him all fulneſs dwelling, and for the uſe of ſuch ſinners as you are. The enemy will try all his wiles and malice to keep you from Jeſus, and your legal unbelieving hearts will help him mightily: but conſider what a free grant he has made in the goſpel of all the bleſſings of his ſalvation. He requires no condition of you, wants no qualification in you. Take what he offers. Receive it, and it is yours. All is by free gift. Chriſt himſelf is a gift, and ſo is grace, righteouſneſs, holineſs, and heaven. All good things

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are the free gift of God through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. What can be a greater encouragement? The ſalvation finiſhed in all its parts is offered and made good, not to him that worketh, but to him that believeth. And therefore whoever or whatever you are in your own eyes, yet Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſuch. This is a faithful ſaying, that he came to ſave the chief of ſinners. This is worthy to be received. It has the honourable teſtimony of God himſelf, and therefore ſurely you may receive it, and depend upon it. Come, for all things are now ready; and you ſhall be ſaved freely by grace through faith, and that not of yourſelves, it is the gift of God.

If you are a convinced ſinner, make what objections you can againſt yourſelf, they are all anſwered in the goſpel. Say, you are a great ſinner, but not ſo great as Jeſus is a Saviour. Perhaps you are old in ſin, yet his mercies are from everlaſting to everlaſting. Suppoſe your ſins are numerous as the ſtars, far, infinitely more are his mercies. Say you are very deep in guilt, what ſcarlet crimſon ſins cannot his blood waſh clean? If thou hadſt all the ſins of earth and hell upon thy guilty ſoul, yet it is written, He that believeth ſhall be juſtified from all things. Oh that you may not ſtand reaſoning againſt the infinite ſufficiency of Jeſus to ſave. All things

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are poſſible to Jeſus, and ſo are all things poſſible to him that believeth. Be not faithleſs then, but believing: may it be given thee to believe in the only begotten Son of God.

If this be thy happy caſe, and thou art already a partaker of the precious gift of faith. Jeſus is ſtill thy object. Look unto him for all things. They are all treaſured up in his fulneſs, and all received by believing. Thy ſafety, thy victories, thy holy walk, thy comforts and joys, theſe come unto thee and are enjoyed by faith. He is thy all perfect Saviour, and he being thine, all he has, and all he is, is thine alſo. He has made them over to thee in the free grant of the goſpel, and all the perfections of the Godhead ſtand engaged to keep thee in poſſeſſion of them: therefore walk cloſe to Chriſt, and live up to thy privileges, and ſee thou ſtop not ſhort of any thing promiſed, which will be to his glory, and to thy comfort. There are unſearchable riches of grace in Jeſus, full authority in Chriſt, and abſolute power in Jehovah to beſtow them. Whatever grace thou wanteſt at any time, thou wilt honour Jeſus Chriſt the Lord, if thou wilt by faith live upon him for the receiving it: and thou wilt infallibly receive it according to thy faith. Believe in him for ſafety, for righteouſneſs, for holineſs, for happineſs, and as thou believeſt, ſo ſhall it be done unto thee——thou

ſhalt

ſhalt have all that thou canſt aſk, yea more than thou canſt think. May this be the happy caſe of all who hear me to day. If I never ſtand up any more in this place, may we all ſo know and believe in Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, that we may be found in that happy number who ſhall aſcribe honour and glory, and bleſſing and power, to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three perſons in one Jehovah, to whom be equal praiſe for ever and ever. *Amen.*

END OF THE FIFTH VOLUME.

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